

# **The Jim Corbett Omnibus**



**MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON  
THE TEMPLE TIGER AND MORE MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON  
THE MAN-EATING LEOPARD OF RUDRAPRAYAG  
MY INDIA  
JUNGLE LORE  
TREE TOPS**

# THE JIM CORBETT OMNIBUS

JIM CORBETT



*Illustrated by*  
RAYMOND SHEPPARD

# MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON



*By*  
JIM CORBETT

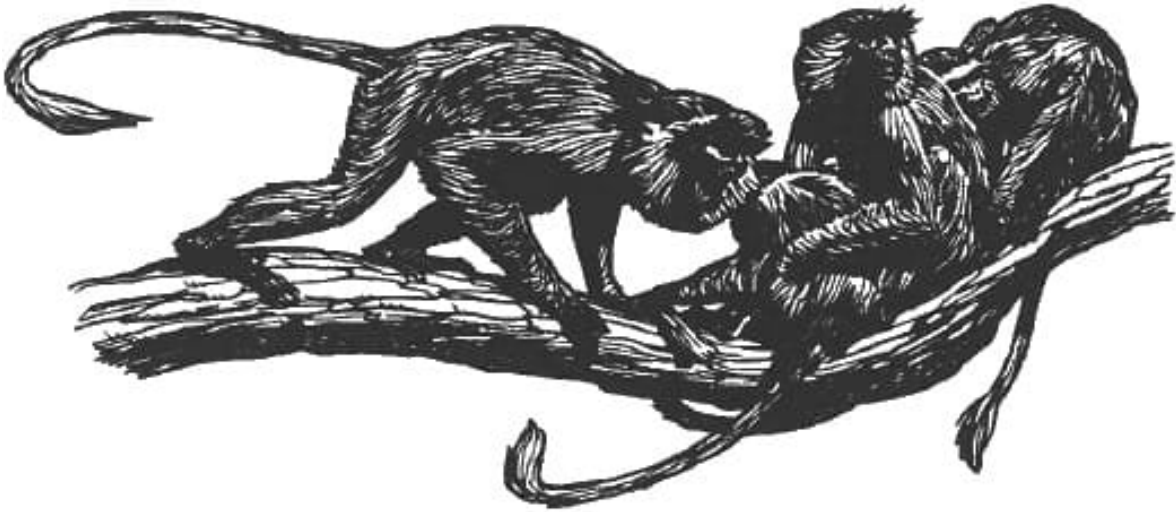
*With an Introduction by*  
SIR MAURICE HALLETT  
GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED PROVINCES, 1939-45

*and a Preface by*  
LORD LINLITHGOW  
VICEORY OF INDIA, 1936-43





Dedicated  
to the  
gallant soldiers, sailors, and airmen  
of the United Nations, who during 1939-1945  
lost their sight  
in the services of their country



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## ***Introduction***

***by Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of the United Provinces, 1939-45.***

THESE jungle stories by Jim Corbett merit as much popularity and as wide a circulation as Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books. Kipling's Jungle Books were fiction, based on great knowledge of jungle life; Corbett's stories are fact, and fact is often stranger than fiction. These stories should prove of entrancing interest to all boys and girls who like exciting yarns; they should be of equal interest to all who take any interest in the wild life of the jungle; they should prove of great value to any genuine sportsman who wishes to earn by his own efforts the credit of shooting a tiger; they will be of interest even to the so-called sportsman who feels some pride in killing a tiger when all that he has done is to fire straight from a safe position on a *machan* or on the back of a staunch elephant, when all the hard work involved in beating up a tiger to his death has been done by others.

Corbett's description of his campaign against the man-eaters of the Kumaon Hills shows the qualities that a successful *shikari* needs, physical strength, infinite patience, great power of observation and power not only to notice small signs but also to draw the right inference from those signs. To these must be added great courage. I will not make quotations from the book to prove this statement. Read the book for yourself; you will soon see the truth of it; these qualities were exhibited by Corbett himself, by his friends who helped him in some of these campaigns, by the villagers whom he went to protect, and by his big-hearted and faithful companion Robin.

Jim Corbett's name is already a household word in Kumaon; I hope that as a result of this book it will get still wider fame.

M. G. HALLETT

## *Foreword*

*by Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, 1936-43.*

THESE stories are the true account of Major Corbett's experiences with man-eating tigers in the jungles of the United Provinces. I am most glad to commend them to all who enjoy a tale well told of action and adventure.

The sportsman will find much to entertain and inform him in Major Corbett's book. If every beginner would study it before tackling his first tiger, fewer persons would be killed or seriously injured when hunting these creatures. For something more is required than courage and good marksmanship for the successful pursuit of dangerous game. Forethought, preparation, and persistence are indispensable to success.

Over wide areas of the United Provinces the author's name is familiar to the village folk as that of the man who has brought them relief from the great fear inspired by a cruel and malignant presence in their midst. Many a District Officer, faced with the utter disorganization of rural life that attends the presence of a man-eating tiger or panther, has turned to Jim Corbett for help— never, I believe, in vain. Indeed the destruction of these abnormal and dangerous animals is a service of great value both to the afflicted population and to Government.

The reader will find in these stories many proofs of the author's love of nature. Having spent in Major Corbett's company some part of such holidays as I have contrived to take during my time in India, I can with confidence write of him that no man with whom I have hunted in any continent better understands the signs of the jungle. Very often he has told me of the intense happiness he has derived from his observations of wild life. I make no doubt that it is in large part the recollection of all that his own eyes have brought him that moves him now to dedicate this first edition of his book to the aid of soldiers blinded in war, and to arrange that all profits from its sale shall be devoted to the funds of St Dunstan's, the famous institution in which men who have given their sight for their

country and for the great cause of human freedom may learn, despite their affliction, to lead useful and happy lives; and whose beneficent ministrations are extended now to the armed forces in India.

*Viceroy's House,  
New Delhi*

LINLITHGOW



### *Author's Note*

**A**S MANY of the stories in this book are about man-eating tigers, it is perhaps desirable to explain why these animals develop man-eating tendencies.

A man-eating tiger is a tiger that has been compelled, through stress of circumstances beyond its control, to adopt a diet alien to it. The stress of circumstances is, in nine cases out of ten, wounds, and in the tenth case old age. The wound that has caused a particular tiger to take to man-eating might be the result of a carelessly fired shot and failure to follow up and recover the wounded animal, or be the result of the tiger having lost his temper when killing a porcupine. Human beings are not the natural prey of tigers, and it is only when tigers have been incapacitated through wounds or old age that, in order to live, they are compelled to take to a diet of human flesh.

A tiger when killing its natural prey, which it does either by stalking or lying in wait for it, depends for the success of its attack on its speed and, to a lesser extent, on the condition of its teeth and claws. When, therefore, a tiger is suffering from one or more painful wounds, or when its teeth are missing or defective and its claw worn down, and it is unable to catch the animals it has been accustomed to eating, it is driven by necessity to killing human beings. The change-over from animal to human flesh is, I believe, in

most cases accidental. As an illustration of what I mean by ' accidental ' I quote the case of the Muktesar man-eating tigress. This tigress, a comparatively young animal, in an encounter with a porcupine lost an eye and got some fifty quills, varying in length from one to nine inches, embedded in the arm and under the pad of her right foreleg. Several of these quills after striking a bone had doubled back in the form of a U, the point, and the broken-off end, being quite close together. Suppurating sores formed where she endeavoured to extract the quills with her teeth, and while she was lying up in a thick patch of grass, starving and licking her wounds, a woman selected this particular patch of grass to cut as fodder for her cattle. At first the tigress took no notice, but when the woman had cut the grass right up to where she was lying the tigress struck once, the blow crushing in the woman's skull. Death was instantaneous, for, when found the following day, she was grasping her sickle with one hand and holding a tuft of grass, which she was about to cut when struck, with the other. Leaving the woman lying where she had fallen, the tigress limped off for a distance of over a mile and took refuge in a little hollow under a fallen tree. Two days later a man came to chip firewood off this fallen tree, and the tigress who was lying on the far side killed him. The man fell across the tree, and as he had removed his coat and shirt and the tigress had clawed his back when killing him, it is possible that the smell of the blood trickling down his body as he hung across the bole of the tree first gave her the idea that he was something that she could satisfy her hunger with. However that may be, before leaving him she ate a small portion from his back. A day after she killed her third victim deliberately, and without having received any provocation. Thereafter she became an established man-eater and had killed twenty-four people before she was finally accounted for.

A tiger on a fresh kill, or a wounded tiger, or a tigress with small cubs, will occasionally kill human beings who disturb them; but these tigers cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be called man-eaters, though they are often so called. Personally I would give a tiger the benefit of the doubt once, and once again, before classing it as a man-eater, and whenever possible I would subject the alleged victim to a post-mortem before letting the kill go down on the records as the kill of a tiger or a leopard, as the case might be. This subject of post-mortems of human beings alleged to have

been killed by either tigers or leopards or, in the plains, by wolves or hyenas, is of great importance, for, though I refrain from giving instances, I know of cases where deaths have wrongly been ascribed to carnivora.

It is a popular fallacy that all man-eaters are old and mangy, the mange being attributed to the excess of salt in human flesh. I am not competent to give any opinion on the relative quantity of salt in human or animal flesh; but I can, and I do, assert that a diet of human flesh, so far from having an injurious effect on the coat of man-eaters, has quite the opposite effect, for all the man-eaters I have seen have had remarkably fine coats.

Another popular belief in connexion with man-eaters is that the cubs of these animals automatically become man-eaters. This is quite a reasonable supposition; but it is not borne out by actual facts, and the reason why the cubs of a man-eater do not themselves become man-eaters, is that human beings are not the natural prey of tigers, or of leopards.

A cub will eat whatever its mother provides, and I have even known of tiger cubs assisting their mothers to kill human beings: but I do not know of a single instance of a cub, after it had left the protection of its parent, or after that parent had been killed, taking to killing human beings.

In the case of human beings killed by carnivora, the doubt is often expressed' as to whether the animal responsible for the kill is a tiger or leopard. As a general rule—to which I have seen no exceptions—tigers are responsible for all kills that take place in daylight, and leopards are responsible for all kills that take place in the dark. Both animals are semi-nocturnal forest-dwellers, have much the same habits, employ similar methods of killing, and both are capable of carrying their human victims for long distances. It would be natural, therefore, to expect them to hunt at the same hours; and that they do not do so is due to the difference in courage of the two animals. When a tiger becomes a man-eater it loses all fear of human beings and, as human beings move about more freely in the day than they do at night, it is able to secure its victims during daylight hours and there is no necessity for it to visit their habitations at night. A leopard on the other hand, even after it has killed scores of human beings, never loses its



fear of man; and, as it is unwilling to face up to human beings in daylight, it secures its victims when they are moving about at night, or by breaking into their houses at night. Owing to these characteristics of the two animals, namely, that one loses its fear of human beings and kills in the daylight, while the other retains its fear and kills in the dark, man-eating tigers are easier to shoot than man-eating leopards.

The frequency with which a man-eating tiger kills depends on (a) the supply of natural food in the area in which it is operating; (b) the nature of the disability which has caused it to become a man-eater, and (c) whether it is a male or a female with cubs.

Those of us who lack the opportunity of forming our own opinion on any particular subject are apt to accept the opinions of others, and in no case is this more apparent than in the case of tigers— here I do not refer to man-eaters in particular, but to tigers in general. The author who first used the words 'as cruel as a tiger' and 'as bloodthirsty as a tiger', when attempting to emphasize the evil character of the villain of his piece, not only showed a lamentable ignorance of the animal he defamed, but coined phrases which have come into universal circulation, and which are mainly responsible for the wrong opinion of tigers held by all except that very small proportion of the public who have the opportunity of forming their own opinions.

When I see the expression 'as cruel as a tiger' and 'as bloodthirsty as a tiger' in print, I think of a small boy armed with an old muzzle— loading gun— the right barrel of which was split for six inches of its length, and the stock and barrels of which were kept from falling apart by lashings of brass wire— wandering through the jungles of the terai and bhabar in the days when there were ten tigers to every one that now survives; sleeping anywhere he happened to be when night came on, with a small fire to give him company and warmth, wakened at intervals by the calling of tigers, sometimes in the distance, at other times near at hand; throwing another stick on the fire and turning over and continuing his interrupted sleep without one thought of unease; knowing from his own short experience and from what others, who like himself had spent their days in the jungles, had told him, that a tiger, unless molested, would do him no harm; or during

daylight hours avoiding any tiger he saw, and when that was not possible, standing perfectly still until it had passed and gone, before continuing on his way. And I think of him on one occasion stalking half-a-dozen jungle fowl that were feeding in the open, and on creeping up to a plum bush and standing up to peer over, the bush heaving and a tiger walking out on the far side and, on clearing the bush, turning round and looking at the boy with an expression on its face which said as clearly as any words, 'Hello, kid, what the hell are you doing here?' and, receiving no answer, turning round and waiting away very slowly without once looking back.. And then again I think of the tens of thousands of men, women and children who, while working in the forests or cutting grass or collecting dry sticks, pass day after day close to where tigers are lying up and who, when they return safely to their homes, do not even know that they have been under the observation of this so called 'cruel' and 'bloodthirsty' animal.

Half a century has rolled by since the day the tiger walked out of the plum bush, the latter thirty-two years of which have been spent in the more or less regular pursuit of man-eaters, and though sights have been seen which would have caused a stone to weep, I have not seen a case where a tiger has been deliberately cruel or where it has been bloodthirsty to the extent that it has killed, without provocation, more than it has needed to satisfy its hunger or the hunger of its cubs.

A tiger's function in the scheme of things is to help maintain the balance in nature and if, on rare occasions when driven by dire necessity, he kills a human being or when his natural food has been ruthlessly exterminated by man he kills two per cent of the cattle he is alleged to have killed, it is not fair that for these acts a whole species should be branded as being cruel and bloodthirsty.

Sportsmen are admittedly conservative, the reason being that it has taken them years to form their opinions, and as each individual has a different point of view, it is only natural that opinions should differ on minor, or even in some cases on major, points, and for this reason I do not flatter myself that all the opinions I have expressed will meet with universal agreement.

There is, however, one point on which I am convinced that all sportsmen — no matter whether their viewpoint has been a platform on a tree, the back of an elephant or their own feet— will agree with me, and that is, that a tiger is a large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage and that when he is exterminated— as exterminated he will be unless public opinion rallies to his support— India will be the poorer by having lost the finest of her fauna.

Leopards, unlike tigers, are to a certain extent scavengers and become man-eaters by acquiring a taste for human flesh when unrestricted slaughter of game has deprived them of their natural food.

The dwellers in our hills are predominantly Hindu, and as such cremate their dead. The cremation invariably takes place on the bank of a stream or river in order that the ashes may be washed down into the Ganges and eventually into the sea. As most of the villages are situated high up on the hills, while the streams or rivers are in many cases miles away down in the valleys, it will be realized that a funeral entails a considerable tax on the man-power of a small community when, in addition to the carrying party, labour has to be provided to collect and carry the fuel needed for the cremation. In normal times these rites are carried out very effectively; but when disease in epidemic form sweeps through the hills and the inhabitants die faster than they can be disposed of, a very simple rite, which consists of placing a live coal in the mouth of the deceased, is performed in the village and the body is then carried to the edge of the hill and cast into the valley below.

A leopard, in an area in which his natural food is scarce, finding these bodies very soon acquires a taste for human flesh, and when the disease dies down and normal conditions are established, he very naturally, on finding his food supply cut off, takes to killing human beings.

Of the two man-eating leopards of Kumaon, which between them killed five hundred and twenty-five human beings, one followed on the heels of a very severe outbreak of cholera, while the other followed the mysterious disease which swept through India in 1918 and was called ‘war fever’.

J.C.





## *The Champawat Man-Eater*

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### I

**I** WAS shooting with Eddie Knowles in Malani when I first heard of the tiger which later received official recognition as the 'Champawat man-eater'.

Eddie, who will long be remembered in this province as a sportsman par excellence and the possessor of an inexhaustible fund of *shikar* yarns, was one of those few, and very fortunate, individuals who possess the best of everything in life. His rifle was without equal in accuracy and striking power, and while one of his brothers was the best gun shot in India, another brother was the best tennis player in the Indian Army. When therefore Eddie informed me that his brother-in-law, the best *shikari* in the world, had been deputed by Government to shoot the Champawat man-eater, it was safe to assume that a very definite period had been put to the animal's activities.

The tiger, however, for some inexplicable reason, did not die, and was causing Government a great deal of anxiety when I visited Naini Tal four years later. Rewards were offered, special shikaris employed, and parties of Gurkhas sent out from the depot in Almora. Yet in spite of these measures, the toll of human victims continued to mount alarmingly.

The tigress, for such the animal turned out to be, had arrived in Kumaon as a full-fledged man-eater, from Nepal, from whence she had been driven out by a body of armed Nepalese after she had killed two hundred human beings, and during the four years she had been operating in Kumaon had added two hundred and thirty-four to this number.

This is how matters stood, when shortly after my arrival in Naini Tal I received a visit from Berthoud. Berthoud, who was Deputy Commissioner of Naini Tal at that time, and who after his tragic death now lies buried in an obscure grave in Haldwani, was a man who was loved and respected by all who knew him, and it is not surprising therefore that when he told me of the trouble the man-eater was giving the people of his district, and the anxiety it was causing him, he took my promise with him that I would start for Champawat immediately on receipt of news of the next human kill.

Two conditions I made, however: one that the Government rewards be cancelled, and the other, that the special shikaris, and regulars from Almora, be withdrawn. My reasons for making these conditions need no explanation for I am sure all sportsmen share my aversion to being classed as a reward-hunter and are as anxious as I am to avoid the risk of being accidentally shot. These conditions were agreed to, and a week later Berthoud paid me an early morning visit and informed me that news had been brought in during the night by runners that a woman had been killed by the man-eater at Pali, a village between Dabidhura and Dhunaghat.

In anticipation of a start at short notice, I had engaged six men to carry my camp kit, and leaving after breakfast, we did a march the first day of seventeen miles to Dhari. Breakfasting at Mornaula next morning, we spent the night at Dabidhura, and arrived at Pali the following evening, five days after the woman had been killed.

The people of the village, numbering some fifty men, women and children, were in a state of abject terror, and though the sun was still up when I arrived I found the entire population inside their homes behind locked doors, and it was not until my men had made a fire in the courtyard

and I was sitting down to a cup of tea that a door here and there was cautiously opened, and the frightened inmates emerged.

I was informed that for five days no one had gone beyond their own doorsteps— the insanitary condition of the courtyard testified to the truth of this statement— that food was running short, and that the people would starve if the tiger was not killed or driven away.

That the tiger was still in the vicinity was apparent. For three nights it had been heard calling on the road, distant a hundred yards from the houses, and that very day it had been seen on the cultivated land at the lower end of the village.

The Headman of the village very willingly placed a room at my disposal, but as there were eight of us to share it, and the only door it possessed opened on to the insanitary courtyard, I elected to spend the night in the open.

After a scratch meal which had to do duty for dinner, I saw my men safely shut into the room and myself took up a position on the side of the road, with my back to a tree. The villagers said the tiger was in the habit of perambulating along this road, and as the moon was at the full I thought there was a chance of my getting a shot— provided I saw it first.

I had spent many nights in the jungle looking for game, but this was the first time I had ever spent a night looking for a man-eater. The length of road immediately in front of me was brilliantly lit by the moon, but to right and left the overhanging trees cast dark shadows, and when the night wind agitated the branches and the shadows moved, I saw a dozen tigers advancing on me, and bitterly regretted the impulse that had induced me to place myself at the man-eater's mercy. I lacked the courage to return to the village and admit I was too frightened to carry out my self-imposed task, and with teeth chattering, as much from fear as from cold, I sat out the long night. As the grey dawn was lighting up the snowy range which I was facing, I rested my head on my drawn-up knees, and it was in this position

my men an hour later found me— fast asleep; of the tiger I had neither heard nor seen anything.

Back in the village I tried to get the men— who I could see were very surprised I had survived the night— to take me to the places where the people of the village had from time to time been killed, but this they were unwilling to do. From the courtyard they pointed out the direction in which the kills had taken place; the last kill— the one that had brought me to the spot— I was told, had taken place round the shoulder of the hill to the west of the village. The women and girls, some twenty in number, who had been out collecting oak leaves for the cattle when the unfortunate woman had been killed, were eager to give me details of the occurrence. It appeared that the party had set out two hours before midday and, after going half a mile, had climbed into trees to cut leaves. The victim and two other women had selected a tree growing on the edge of a ravine, which I subsequently found was about four feet deep and ten to twelve feet wide. Having cut all the leaves she needed, the woman was climbing down from the tree when the tiger, who had approached unseen, stood up on its hind legs and caught her by the foot. Her hold was torn from the branch she was letting herself down by, and, pulling her into the ravine, the tiger released her foot, and while she was struggling to rise caught her by the throat. After killing her it sprang up the side of the ravine and disappeared with her into some heavy undergrowth.

All this had taken place a few feet from the two women on the tree, and had been witnessed by the entire party. As soon as the tiger and its victim were out of sight, the terror-stricken women and girls ran back to the village. The men had just come in for their midday meal and, when all were assembled and armed with drums, metal cooking-pots— anything in fact that would produce a noise— the rescue party set off, the men leading and the women bringing up the rear.

Arrived at the ravine in which the woman had been killed, the very important question of ' what next?' was being debated when the tiger interrupted the proceedings by emitting a loud roar from the bushes thirty yards away. As one man the party turned and fled helter-skelter back to the



village. When breath had been regained, accusations were made against one and another of having been the first to run and cause the stampede.

Words ran high until it was suggested that if no one was afraid and all were as brave as they claimed to be, why not go back and rescue the woman without loss of more time? The suggestion was adopted, and three times the party got as far as the ravine. On the third occasion the one man who was armed with a gun fired it off, and brought the tiger roaring out of the bushes; after this the attempted rescue was very wisely abandoned. On my asking the gun man why he had not discharged his piece into the bushes instead of up into the air, he said the tiger was already greatly enraged and that if by any mischance he had hit it, it would undoubtedly have killed him.

For three hours that morning I walked round the village looking for tracks and hoping, and at the same time dreading, to meet the tiger. At one place in a dark heavily-wooded ravine, while I was skirting some bushes, a covey of kaleege pheasants fluttered screaming out of them, and I thought my heart had stopped beating for good.

My men had cleared a spot under a walnut tree for my meals, and after breakfast the Headman of the village asked me to mount guard while the wheat crop was being cut. He said that if the crop was not harvested in my presence, it would not be harvested at all, for the people were too frightened to leave their homes. Half an hour later the entire population of the village, assisted by my men, were hard at work while I stood on guard with a loaded rifle. By evening the crop from five large fields had been gathered, leaving only two small patches close to the houses, which the Headman said he would have no difficulty in dealing with the next day.

The sanitary condition of the village had been much improved, and a second room for my exclusive use placed at my disposal; and that night, with thorn bushes securely wedged in the doorway to admit ventilation and exclude the man-eater, I made up for the sleep I had lost the previous night.

My presence was beginning to put new heart into the people and they were moving about more freely, but I had not yet gained sufficient of their confidence to renew my request of being shown round the jungle, to which I attached some importance. These people knew every foot of the ground for miles round, and could, if they wished, show me where I was most likely to find the tiger, or in any case, where I could see its pug marks. That the man-eater was a tiger was an established fact, but it was not known whether the animal was young or old, a male or a female, and this information, which I believed would help me to get in touch with it, I could only ascertain by examining its pug marks.

After an early tea that morning I announced that I wanted meat for my men and asked the villagers if they could direct me to where I could shoot a *ghooral* (mountain goat). The village was situated on the top of a long ridge running east and west, and just below the road on which I had spent the night the hill fell steeply away to the north in a series of grassy slopes; on these slopes I was told *ghooral* were plentiful, and several men volunteered to show me over the ground. I was careful not to show my pleasure at this offer and, selecting three men, I set out, telling the Headman that if I found the *ghooral* as plentiful as he said they were, I would shoot two for the village in addition to shooting one for my men.

Crossing the road we went down a very steep ridge, keeping a sharp lookout to right and left, but saw nothing. Half a mile down the hill the ravines converged, and from their junction there was a good view of the rocky, and grass-covered, slope to the right. I had been sitting for some minutes, scanning the slope, with my back to a solitary pine which grew at this spot, when a movement high up on the hill caught my eye. When the movement was repeated I saw it was a *ghooral* flapping its ears; the animal was standing in grass and only its head was visible. The men had not seen the movement, and as the head was now stationary and blended in with its surroundings it was not possible to point it out to them. Giving them a general idea of the animal's position I made them sit down and watch while I took a shot. I was armed with an old Martini Henry rifle, a weapon that atoned for its vicious kick by being dead accurate— up to any range. The

distance was as near 200 yards as made no matter and, lying down and resting the rifle on a convenient pine root, I took careful aim, and fired.

The smoke from the black powder cartridge obscured my view and the men said nothing had happened and that I had probably fired at a rock, or a bunch of dead leaves. Retaining my position I reloaded the rifle and presently saw the grass, a little below where I had fired, moving, and the hind quarters of the *ghooral* appeared. When the whole animal was free of the grass it started to roll over and over, gaining momentum as it came down the steep hill. When' it was half-way down it disappeared into heavy grass, and disturbed two *ghooral* that had been lying up there. Sneezing their alarm call, the two animals dashed out of the grass and went bounding up the hill. The range was shorter now, and, adjusting the leaf sight, I waited until the bigger of the two slowed down and put a bullet through its back, and as the other one turned, and made off diagonally across the hill, I shot it through the shoulder.

On occasions one is privileged to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Lying in an uncomfortable position and shooting up at an angle of sixty degrees at a range of 200 yards at the small white mark on the *ghooral*'s throat, there did not appear to be one chance in a million of the shot coming off, and yet the heavy lead bullet driven by black powder had not been deflected by a hair's breadth and had gone true to its mark, killing the animal instantaneously. Again, on the steep hillside which was broken up by small ravines and jutting rocks, the dead animal had slipped and rolled straight to the spot where its two companions were lying up; and before it had cleared the patch of grass the two companions in their turn were slipping rolling down the hill. As the three dead animals landed in the ravine in front of us it was amusing to observe the surprise and delight of the men who never before had seen a rifle in action. All thought of the man-eater was for the time being forgotten as they scrambled down into the ravine to retrieve the bag.

The expedition was a great success in more ways than one; for in addition to providing a ration of meat for everyone, it gained me the confidence of the entire village. Shikar yarns, as everyone knows, never

lose anything in repetition, and while the *ghooral* were being skinned and divided up the three men who had accompanied me gave full rein to their imagination, and from where I sat in the open, having breakfast, I could hear the exclamations of the assembled crowd when they were told that the *ghooral* had been shot at a range of over a mile, and that the magic bullets used had not only killed the animals— like that— but had also drawn them to the sahib's feet.

After the midday meal the Headman asked me where I wanted to go, and how many men I wished to take with me. From the eager throng of men who pressed round I selected two of my late companions, and with them to guide me set off to visit the scene of the last human tragedy.

The people of our hills are Hindus and cremate their dead, and when one of their number has been carried off by a man-eater it is incumbent on the relatives to recover some portion of the body for cremation even if it be only a few splinters of bone. In the case of this woman the cremation ceremony was yet to be performed, and as we started out, the relatives requested us to bring back any portion of the body we might find.

From early boyhood I have made a hobby of reading, and interpreting, jungle signs. In the present case I had the account of the eye-witnesses who were present when the woman was killed, but eye-witnesses are not always reliable, whereas jungle signs are a true record of all that has transpired. On arrival at the spot a glance at the ground showed me that the tiger could only have approached the tree one way, without being seen, and that was up the ravine. Entering the ravine a hundred yards below the tree, and working up, I found the pug marks of a tiger in some fine earth that had sifted down between two big rocks; these pug marks showed the animal to be a tigress, a little past her prime. Further up the ravine, and some ten yards from the tree, the tigress had lain down behind a rock, presumably to wait for the woman to climb down from the tree. The victim had been the first to cut all the leaves she needed, and as she was letting herself down by a branch some two inches in diameter the tigress had crept forward and, standing up on her hind legs, had caught the woman by the foot and pulled her down into the ravine. The branch showed the desperation with which the

unfortunate woman had clung to it, for adhering to the rough oak bark where the branch, and eventually the leaves, had slipped through her grasp were strands of skin which had been torn from the palms of her hands and fingers. Where the tigress had killed the woman there were signs of a struggle and a big patch of dried blood; from here the blood trail, now dry but distinctly visible, led across the ravine and up the opposite bank. Following the blood trail from where it left the ravine we found the place in the bushes where the tigress had eaten her kill.

It is a popular belief that man-eaters do not eat the head, hands, and feet of the human victims. This is incorrect. Man-eaters, if not disturbed, eat everything— including the blood-soaked clothes, as I found on one occasion; however, that is another story, and will be told some other time.

On the present occasion we found the woman's clothes, and a few pieces of bone which we wrapped up in the clean cloth we had brought for the purpose. Pitifully little as these remains were, they would suffice for the cremation ceremony which would ensure the ashes of the high caste woman reaching Mother Ganges.

After tea I visited the scene of yet another tragedy. Separated from the main village by the public road was a small holding of a few acres. The owner of this holding had built himself a hut on the hillside just above the road. The man's wife, and the mother of his two children, a boy and a girl aged four and six respectively, was the younger of two sisters. These two sisters were out cutting grass one day on the hill above the hut when the tigress suddenly appeared and carried off the elder sister. For a hundred yards the younger woman ran after the tigress brandishing her sickle and screaming at the tigress to let her sister go, and take her instead. This incredible act of heroism was witnessed by the people in the main village. After carrying the dead woman for a hundred yards the tigress put her down and turned on her pursuer. With a loud roar it sprang at the brave woman who, turning, raced down the hillside, across the road, and into the village, evidently with the intention of telling the people what they, unknown to her, had already witnessed. The woman's incoherent noises were at the time attributed to loss of breath, fear, and excitement, and it was not until the

rescue party that had set out with all speed had returned, unsuccessful, that it was found the woman had lost her power of speech. I was told this tale in the village, and when I climbed the path to the two-roomed hut where the woman was engaged in washing clothes, she had then been dumb a twelvemonth.



Except for a strained look in her eyes the dumb woman appeared to be quite normal and, when I stopped to speak to her and tell her I had come to try and shoot the tiger that had killed her sister, she put her hands together and stooping down touched my feet, making me feel a wretched impostor. True, I had come with the avowed object of shooting the man-eater, but with an animal that had the reputation of never killing twice in the same locality, never returning to a kill, and whose domain extended over an area of many hundred square miles, the chance of my accomplishing my object was about as good as finding a needle in two haystacks.

Plans in plenty I had made way back in Naini Tal; one I had already tried and wild horses would not induce me to try it again, and the others— now that I was on the ground— were just as unattractive. Further there was no one I could ask for advice, for this was the first man-eater that had ever been known in Kumaon; and yet something would have to be done. So for the next three days I wandered through the jungles from sunrise to sunset, visiting all the places for miles round where the villagers told me there was a chance of my seeing the tigress.

I would like to interrupt my tale here for a few minutes to refute a rumour current throughout the hills that on this, and on several subsequent occasions, I assumed the dress of a hill woman and, going into the jungle, attracted the man-eaters to myself and killed them with either a sickle or an axe. All I have ever done in the matter of alteration of dress has been to borrow a sari and with it draped round me cut grass, or, climbed into trees and cut leaves, and in no case has the ruse proved successful; though on two occasions— to my knowledge— man-eaters have stalked the tree I was on, taking cover, on one occasion behind a rock and on the other behind a fallen tree, and giving me no opportunity of shooting them.

To continue. As the tigress now appeared to have left this locality I decided, much to the regret of the people of Pali, to move to Champawat fifteen miles due east of Pali. Making an early start, I breakfasted at Dhunaghat, and completed the journey to Champawat by sunset. The roads in this area were considered very unsafe, and men only moved from village to village or to the bazaars in large parties. After leaving Dhunaghat, my



party of eight was added to by men from villages adjoining the road, and we arrived at Champawat thirty strong. Some of the men who joined me had been in a party of twenty men who had visited Champawat two months earlier, and they told me the following very pitiful story.

‘The road for a few miles on this side of Champawat runs along the south face of the hill, parallel to, and about fifty yards above the valley. Two months ago a party of twenty of us men were on our way to the bazaar at Champawat, and as we were going along this length of the road at about midday, we were startled by hearing the agonized cries of a human being coming from the valley below. Huddled together on the edge of the road we cowered in fright as these cries drew nearer and nearer, and presently into view came a tiger, carrying a naked woman. The woman’s hair was trailing on the ground on one side of the tiger, and her feet on the other— the tiger was holding her by the small of the back— and she was beating her chest and calling alternately on God and man to help her. Fifty yards from, and in clear view of us, the tiger passed with its burden, and when the cries had died away in the distance we continued on our way.’

‘And you twenty men did nothing?’

‘No, sahib, we did nothing for we were afraid, and what can men do when they are afraid? And further, even if we had been able to rescue the woman without angering the tiger and bringing misfortune on ourselves, it would have availed the woman nothing, for she was covered with blood and would of a surety have died of her wounds.’

I subsequently learned that the victim belonged to a village near Champawat, and that she had been carried off by the tiger while collecting dry sticks. Her companions had run back to the village and raised an alarm, and just as a rescue party was starting the twenty frightened men arrived. As these men knew the direction in which the tiger had gone with its victim, they joined the party, and can best carry on the story.

‘We were fifty or sixty strong when we set out to rescue the woman, and several of the party were armed with guns. A furlong from where the sticks

collected by the woman were lying, and from where she had been carried off, we found her torn clothes. Thereafter the men started beating their drums and firing off their guns, and in this way we proceeded for more than a mile right up to the head of the valley, where we found the woman, who was little more than a girl, lying dead on a great slab of rock. Beyond licking off all the blood and making her body clean the tiger had not touched her, and, there being no woman in our party, we men averted our faces as we wrapped her body in the loincloths which one and another gave, for she looked as she lay on her back as one who sleeps, and would waken in shame when touched.'

With experiences such as these to tell and retell through the long night watches behind fast-shut doors, it is little wonder that the character and outlook on life of people living year after year in a man-eater country should change, and that one coming from the outside should feel that he had stepped right into a world of stark realities and the rule of the tooth and claw, which forced man in the reign of the sabre-toothed tiger to shelter in dark caverns. I was young and inexperienced in those far-off Champawat days, but, even so, the conviction I came to after a brief sojourn in that stricken land, that there is no more terrible thing than to live and have one's being under the shadow of a man-eater, has been strengthened by thirty-two years' subsequent experience.

The Tahsildar of Champawat, to whom I had been given letters of introduction, paid me a visit that night at the Dak Bungalow where I was putting up, and suggested I should move next day to a bungalow a few miles away, in the vicinity of which many human beings had been killed.

Early next morning, accompanied by the Tahsildar, I set out for the bungalow, and while I was having breakfast on the verandah two men arrived with news that a cow had been killed by a tiger in a village ten miles away. The Tahsildar excused himself to attend to some urgent work at Champawat, and said he would return to the bungalow in the evening and stay the night with me. My guides were good walkers, and as the track went downhill most of the way we covered the ten miles in record time. Arrived at the village I was taken to a cattle-shed in which I found a week-old calf,

killed and partly eaten by a leopard. Not having the time or the inclination to shoot the leopard I rewarded my guides, and retraced my steps to the bungalow. Here I found the Tahsildar had not returned, and as there was still an hour or more of daylight left I went out with the *chowkidar* of the bungalow to look at a place where he informed me a tiger was in the habit of drinking; this place I found to be the head of the spring which supplied the garden with irrigation water. In the soft earth round the spring were tiger pug marks several days old, but these tracks were quite different from the pug marks I had seen, and carefully examined, in the ravine in which the woman of Pali village had been killed.

On returning to the bungalow I found the Tahsildar was back, and as we sat on the verandah I told him of my day's experience. Expressing regret at my having had to go so far on a wild-goose chase, he rose, saying that as he had a long way to go he must start at once. This announcement caused me no little surprise, for twice that day he had said he would stay the night with me. It was not the question of his staying the night that concerned me, but the risk he was taking; however, he was deaf to all my arguments and, as he stepped off the verandah into the dark night, with only one man following him carrying a smoky lantern which gave a mere glimmer of light, to do a walk of four miles in a locality in which men only moved in large parties in daylight, I took off my hat to a very brave man. Having watched him out of sight I turned and entered the bungalow.

I have a tale to tell of that bungalow but I will not tell it here, for this is a book of jungle stories, and tales 'beyond the laws of nature' do not consort well with such stories.

## II

I spent the following morning in going round the very extensive fruit orchard and tea garden and in having a bath at the spring, and at about midday the Tahsildar, much to my relief, returned safely from Champawat.

I was standing talking to him while looking down a long sloping hill with a village surrounded by cultivated land in the distance, when I saw a man

leave the village and start up the hill in our direction. As the man drew nearer I saw he was alternately running and walking, and was quite evidently the bearer of important news. Telling the Tahsildar I would return in a few minutes, I set off at a run 'down the hill, and when the man saw me coming he sat down to take breath. As soon as I was near enough to hear him he called out, ' Come quickly, sahib, the man-eater has just killed a girl.' 'Sit still,' I called back, and turning ran up to the bungalow. I passed the news on to the Tahsildar while I was getting a rifle and some cartridges, and asked him to follow me down to the village.

The man who had come for me was one of those exasperating individuals whose legs and tongue cannot function at the same time. When he opened his mouth he stopped dead, and when he started to run his mouth closed; so telling him to shut his mouth and lead the way, we ran in silence down the hill.

At the village an excited crowd of men, women and children awaited us and, as usually happens on these occasions, all started to talk at the same time. One man was vainly trying to quieten the babel. I led him aside and asked him to tell me what had happened. Pointing to some scattered oak trees on a gentle slope a furlong or so from the village, he said a dozen people were collecting dry sticks under the trees when a tiger suddenly appeared and caught one of their number, a girl sixteen or seventeen years of age. The rest of the party had run back to the village, and as it was known that I was staying at the bungalow a man had immediately been dispatched to inform me.

The wife of the man I was speaking to had been of the party, and she now pointed out the tree, on the shoulder of the hill, under which the girl had been taken. None of the party had looked back to see if the tiger was carrying away its victim and, if so, in which direction it had gone.

Instructing the crowd not to make a noise, and to remain in the village until I returned, I set off in the direction of the tree. The ground here was quite open and it was difficult to conceive how an animal the size of a tiger

could have approached twelve people unseen, and its presence not detected, until attention had been attracted by the choking sound made by the girl.

The spot where the girl had been killed was marked by a pool of blood and near it, and in vivid contrast to the crimson pool, was a broken necklace of brightly coloured blue beads which the girl had been wearing. From this spot the track led up and round the shoulder of the hill.

The track of the tigress was clearly visible. On one side of it were great splashes of blood where the girl's head had hung down, and on the other side the trail of her feet. Half a mile up the hill I found the girl's sari, and on the brow of the hill her skirt. Once again the tigress was carrying a naked woman, but mercifully on this occasion her burden was dead.

On the brow of the hill the track led through a thicket of blackthorn, on the thorns of which long strands of the girl's raven-black hair had caught. Beyond this was a bed of nettles through which the tigress had gone, and I was looking for a way round this obstruction when I heard footsteps behind me. Turning round I saw a man armed with a rifle coming towards me. I asked him why he had followed me when I had left instructions at the village that no one was to leave it. He said the Tahsildar had instructed him to accompany me, and that he was afraid to disobey orders. As he appeared determined to carry out his orders, and to argue the point would have meant the loss of valuable time, I told him to remove the heavy pair of boots he was wearing and, when he had hidden them under a bush, I advised him to keep close to me, and to keep a sharp lookout behind.

I was wearing a very thin pair of stockings, shorts, and a pair of rubber-soled shoes, and as there appeared to be no way round the nettles I followed the tigress through them— much to my discomfort.

Beyond the nettles the blood trail turned sharply to the left, and went straight down the very steep hill, which was densely clothed with bracken and ringals (Hill bamboos). A hundred yards down, the blood trail led into a narrow and very steep watercourse, down which the tigress had gone with some difficulty, as could be seen from the dislodged stones and earth. I

followed this watercourse for five or six hundred yards, my companion getting more and more agitated the further we went. A dozen times he caught my arm and whispered— in a voice full of tears— that he could hear the tiger, either on one side or the other, or behind us. Half-way down the hill we came on a great pinnacle of rock some thirty feet high, and as the man had by now had all the man-eater hunting he could stand, I told him to climb the rock and remain on it until I returned. Very gladly he went up, and when he straddled the top and signalled to me that he was all right I continued on down the watercourse, which, after skirting round the rock, went straight down for a hundred yards to where it met a deep ravine coming down from the left. At the junction was a small pool, and as I approached it I saw patches of blood on my side of the water.

The tigress had carried the girl straight down on this spot, and my approach had disturbed her at her meal. Splinters of bone were scattered round the deep pug marks into which discoloured water was slowly seeping and at the edge of the pool was an object which had puzzled me as I came down the watercourse, and which I now found was part of a human leg. In all the subsequent years I have hunted man-eaters I have not seen anything as pitiful as that young comely leg— bitten off a little below the knee as clean as though severed by the stroke of an axe— out of which the warm blood was trickling.

While looking at the leg I had forgotten all about the tigress until I suddenly felt that I was in great danger. Hurriedly grounding the butt of the rifle I put two fingers on the triggers, raising my head as I did so, and saw a little earth from the fifteen-foot bank in front of me, come rolling down the steep side and plop into the pool. I was new to this game of man-eater hunting or I should not have exposed myself to an attack in the way I had done. My prompt action in pointing the rifle upwards had possibly saved my life, and in stopping her spring, or in turning to get away, the tigress had dislodged the earth from the top of the bank.

The bank was too steep for scrambling, and the only way of getting up was to take it at a run. Going up the watercourse a short distance I sprinted down, took the pool in my stride, and got far enough up the other side to

grasp a bush and pull myself on to the bank. A bed of *Strobilanthes*, the bent stalks of which were slowly regaining their upright position, showed where, and how recently, the tigress had passed, and a little further on under an overhanging rock I found where she had left her kill when she came to have a look at me.

Her tracks now— as she carried away the girl— led into a wilderness of rocks, some acres in extent, where the going was both difficult and dangerous. The cracks and chasms between the rocks were masked with ferns and blackberry vines, and a false step, which might easily have resulted in a broken limb, would have been fatal. Progress under these conditions was of necessity slow, and the tigress was taking advantage of it to continue her meal. A dozen times I found where she had rested; and after each of these rests the blood trail became more distinct.

This was her four hundred and thirty-sixth human kill and she was quite accustomed to being disturbed at her meals by rescue parties, but this, I think, was the first time she had been followed up so persistently and she now began to show her resentment by growling. To appreciate a tiger's growl to the full it is necessary to be situated as I then was— rocks all round with dense vegetation between, and the imperative necessity of testing each footstep to avoid falling headlong into unseen chasms and caves.

I cannot expect you who read this at your fireside to appreciate my feelings at the time. The sound of the growling and the expectation of an attack terrified me at the same time as it gave me hope. If the tigress lost her temper sufficiently to launch an attack, it would not only give me an opportunity of accomplishing the object for which I had come, but it would enable me to get even with her for all the pain and suffering she had caused.

The growling, however, was only a gesture, and when she found that instead of shooing me off it was bringing me faster on her heels, she abandoned it.

I had now been on her track for over four hours. Though I had repeatedly seen the undergrowth moving I had not seen so much as a hair of her hide, and a glance at the shadows climbing up the opposite hillside warned me it was time to retrace my steps if I was to reach the village before dark.

The late owner of the severed leg was a Hindu, and some portion of her would be needed for the cremation, so as I passed the pool I dug a hole in the bank and buried the leg where it would be safe from the tigress, and could be found when wanted.

My companion on the rock was very relieved to see me. My long absence, and the growling he had heard, had convinced him that the tigress had secured another kill and his difficulty, as he quite frankly admitted, was how he was going to get back to the village alone.

I thought when we were climbing down the watercourse that I knew of no more dangerous proceeding than walking in front of a nervous man carrying a loaded gun, but I changed my opinion when on walking behind him he slipped and fell, and I saw where the muzzle of his gun— a converted .450 without a safety catch— was pointing. Since that day— except when accompanied by Ibbotson— I have made it a hard and fast rule to go alone when hunting man-eaters, for if one's companion is unarmed it is difficult to protect him, and if he is armed, it is even more difficult to protect oneself.

Arrived at the crest of the hill, where the man had hidden his boots, I sat down to have a smoke and think out my plans for the morrow.

The tigress would finish what was left of the kill during the night, and would to a certainty lie up among the rocks next day.

On the ground she was on there was very little hope of my being able to stalk her, and if I disturbed her without getting a shot, she would probably leave the locality and I should lose touch with her. A beat therefore was the only thing to do, provided I could raise sufficient men.



I was sitting on the south edge of a great amphitheatre of hills, without a habitation of any kind in sight. A stream entering from the west had fretted its way down, cutting a deep valley right across the amphitheatre. To the east the stream had struck solid rock, and turning north had left the amphitheatre by a narrow gorge.

The hill in front of me, rising to a height of some two thousand feet, was clothed in short grass with a pine tree dotted here and there, and the hill to the east was too precipitous for anything but a *ghooral* to negotiate. If I could collect sufficient men to man the entire length of the ridge from the stream to the precipitous hill, and get them to stir up the tigress, her most natural line of retreat would be through the narrow gorge.

Admittedly a very difficult beat, for the steep hillside facing north, on which I had left the tigress, was densely wooded and roughly three-quarters of a mile long and half-a-mile wide; however, if I could get the beaters to carry out instructions, there was a reasonable chance of my getting a shot.

The Tahsildar was waiting for me at the village. I explained the position to him, and asked him to take immediate steps to collect as many men as he could, and to meet me at the tree where the girl had been killed at ten o'clock the following morning. Promising to do his best, he left for Champawat, while I climbed the hill to the bungalow.

I was up at crack of dawn next morning, and after a substantial meal told my men to pack up and wait for me at Champawat, and went down to have another look at the ground I intended beating. I could find nothing wrong with the plans I had made, and an hour before my time I was at the spot where I had asked the Tahsildar to meet me.

That he would have a hard time in collecting the men I had no doubt, for the fear of the man-eater had sunk deep into the countryside and more than mild persuasion would be needed to make the men leave the shelter of their homes. At ten o'clock the Tahsildar and one man turned up, and thereafter the men came in twos, and threes, and tens, until by midday two hundred and ninety-eight had collected.

The Tahsildar had let it be known that he would turn a blind eye towards all unlicensed fire-arms, and further that he would provide ammunition where required; and the weapons that were produced that day would have stocked a museum.

When the men were assembled and had received the ammunition they needed I took them to the brow of the hill where the girl's skirt was lying, and pointing to a pine tree on the opposite hill that had been struck by lightning and stripped of bark, I told them to line themselves up along the ridge and, when they saw me wave a handkerchief from under the pine, those of them who were armed were to fire off their pieces, while the others beat drums, shouted, and rolled down rocks, and that no one was on any account to leave the ridge until I returned and personally collected him. When I was assured that all present had heard and understood my instructions, I set off with the Tahsildar, who said he would be safer with me than with the beaters whose guns would probably burst and cause many casualties.

Making a wide detour I crossed the upper end of the valley, gained the opposite hill, and made my way down to the blasted pine. From here the hill went steeply down and the Tahsildar, who had on a thin pair of patent leather shoes, said it was impossible for him to go any further. While he was removing his inadequate foot-gear to ease his blisters, the men on the ridge, thinking I had forgotten to give the pre-arranged signal, fired off their guns and set up a great shout. I was still a hundred and fifty yards from the gorge, and that I did not break my neck a dozen times in covering this distance was due to my having been brought up on the hills, and being in consequence as sure-footed as a goat.

As I ran down the hill I noticed that there was a patch of green grass near the mouth of the gorge, and as there was no time to look round for a better place, I sat down in the grass, with my back to the hill down which I had just come. The grass was about two feet high and hid half my body, and if I kept perfectly still there was a good chance of my not being seen. Facing me was the hill that was being beaten, and the gorge that I hoped the tigress would make for was behind my left shoulder.

Pandemonium had broken loose on the ridge. Added to the fusillade of guns was the wild beating of drums and the shouting of hundreds of men, and when the din was at its worst I caught sight of the tigress bounding down a grassy slope between two ravines to my right front, and about three hundred yards away. She had only gone a short distance when the Tahsildar from his position under the pine let off both barrels of his short-gun. On hearing the shots the tigress whipped round and went straight back the way she had come, and as she disappeared into thick cover I threw up my rifle and sent a despairing bullet after her.

The men on the ridge, hearing the three shots, not unnaturally concluded that the tigress had been killed. They emptied all their guns and gave a final yell, and I was holding my breath and listening for the screams that would herald the tigress's arrival on the ridge, when she suddenly broke cover to my left front and, taking the stream at a bound, came straight for the gorge. The .500 modified cordite rifle, sighted at sea level, shot high at this altitude, and when the tigress stopped dead I thought the bullet had gone over her back, and that she had pulled up on finding her retreat cut off; as a matter of fact I had hit her all right, but a little far back. Lowering her head, she half turned towards me, giving me a beautiful shot at the point of her shoulder at a range of less than thirty yards. She flinched at this second shot but continued, with her ears laid flat and bared teeth, to stand her ground, while I sat with rifle to shoulder trying to think what it would be best for me to do when she charged, for the rifle was empty and I had no more cartridges. Three cartridges were all that I had brought with me, for I never thought I should get a chance of firing more than two shots, and the third cartridge was for— an emergency.

Fortunately the wounded animal most unaccountably decided against a charge. Very slowly she turned, crossed the stream to her right, climbed over some fallen rocks, and found a narrow ledge that went diagonally up and across the face of the precipitous hill to where there was a great flat projecting rock. Where this rock joined the cliff a small bush had found root-hold, and going up to it the tigress started to strip its branches. Throwing caution to the winds I shouted to the Tahsildar to bring me his gun. A long reply was shouted back, the only word of which I caught was

‘feet’: Laying down my rifle I took the hill at a run, grabbed the gun out of the Tahsildar’s hands and raced back.

As I approached the stream the tigress left the bush and came out on the projecting rock towards me. When I was within twenty feet of her I raised the gun and found to my horror that there was a gap of about three-eighths of an inch between the barrels and the breech-block. The gun had not burst when both barrels had been fired, and would probably not burst now, but there was danger of being blinded by a blow back. However, the risk would have to be taken, and, aligning the great blob of a bead that did duty as a sight on the tigress’s open mouth, I fired. Maybe I bobbed, or maybe the gun was not capable of throwing the cylindrical bullet accurately for twenty feet; anyway, the missile missed the tigress’s mouth and struck her on the right paw, from where I removed it later with my finger-nails. Fortunately she was at her last gasp, and the tap on the foot was sufficient to make her lurch forward. She came to rest with her head projecting over the side of the rock.

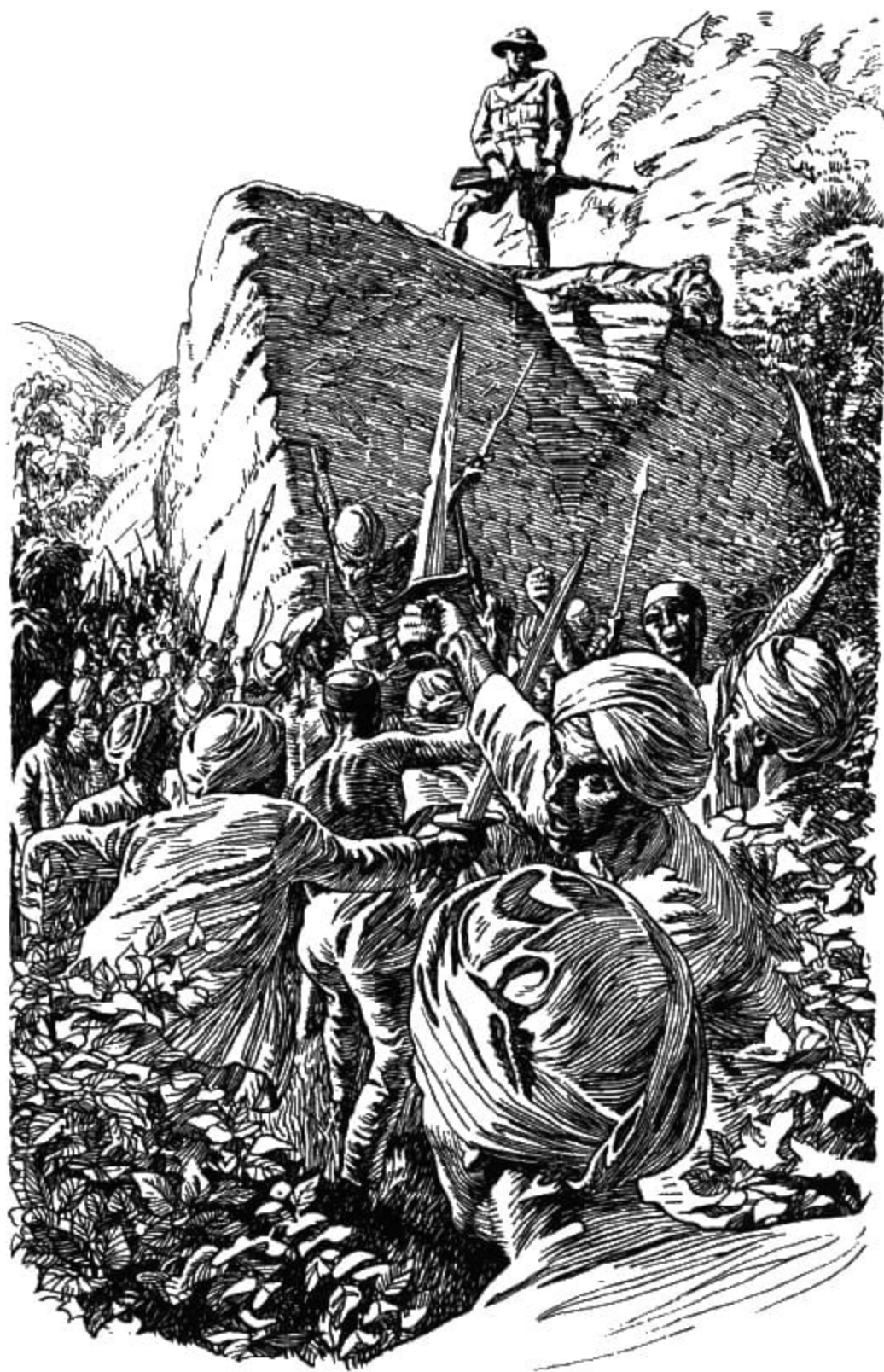
From the moment the tigress had broken cover in her attempt to get through the gorge I had forgotten the beaters, until I was suddenly reminded of their existence by hearing a shout, from a short distance up the hill, of ‘There it is on the rock! Pull it down and let us hack it to bits.’ I could not believe my ears when I heard ‘hack it to bits’, and yet I had heard aright, for others now had caught sight of the tigress and from all over the hillside the shout was being repeated.

The ledge by which the wounded animal had gained the projecting rock was fortunately on the opposite side from the beaters, and was just wide enough to permit my shuffling along it sideways. As I reached the rock and stepped over the tigress— hoping devoutly she was dead for I had not had time to carry out the usual test of pelting her with stones— the men emerged from the forest and came running across the open, brandishing guns, axes, rusty swords, and spears.

At the rock, which was twelve to fourteen feet in height, their advance was checked, for the outer face had been worn smooth by the stream when

in spate and afforded no foothold even for their bare toes. The rage of the crowd on seeing their dread enemy was quite understandable, for there was not a man among them who had not suffered at her hands. One man, who appeared demented and was acting as ring-leader, was shouting over and over again as he ran to and fro brandishing a sword, 'This is the *shaitan* (Devil) that killed my wife and my two sons.' As happens with crowds, the excitement died down as suddenly as it had flared up, and to the credit of the man who had lost his wife and sons be it said that he was the first to lay down his weapon. He came near to the rock and said, 'We were mad, sahib, when we saw our enemy, but the madness has now passed, and we ask you and the Tahsildar sahib to forgive us.' Extracting the unspent cartridge, I laid the gun across the tigress and hung down by my hands and was assisted to the ground. When I showed the men how I had gained the rock the dead animal was very gently lowered and carried to an open spot, where all could crowd round and look at her.

When the tigress had stood on the rock looking down at me I had noticed that there was something wrong with her mouth, and on examining her now I found that the upper and lower canine teeth on the right side of her mouth were broken, the upper one in half, and the lower one right down to the bone. This permanent injury to her teeth—the result of a gun-shot wound—had prevented her from killing her natural prey, and had been the cause of her becoming a man-eater.



The men begged me not to skin the tigress there, and asked me to let them have her until nightfall to carry through their villages, saying that if their womenfolk and children did not see her with their own eyes, they would not believe that their dread enemy was dead.

Two saplings were now cut and laid one on either side of the tigress, and with puggies, waistbands and loincloths she was carefully and very securely lashed to them. When all was ready the saplings were manned and we moved to the foot of the precipitous hill; the men preferred to take the tigress up this hill, on the far side of which their villages lay, to going up the densely wooded hill which they had just beaten. Two human ropes were made by the simple expedient of the man behind taking a firm grip of the waistband, or other portion of clothing, of the man in front of him. When it was considered that the ropes were long and strong enough to stand the strain, they attached themselves to the saplings, and with men on either side to hold the feet of the bearers and give them foothold, the procession moved up the hill, looking for all the world like an army of ants carrying a beetle up the face of a wall. Behind the main army was a second and a smaller one — the Tahsildar being carried up. Had the ropes broken at any stage of that thousand-foot climb, the casualties would have been appalling, but the rope did not break. The men gained the crest of the hill and set off eastwards, singing on their triumphal march, while the Tahsildar and I turned west and made for Champawat.

Our way lay along the ridge and once again I stood among the blackthorn bushes on the thorns of which long tresses of the girl's hair had caught, and for the last time looked down into the amphitheatre which had been the scene of our recent exploit.

On the way down the hill the beaters had found the head of the unfortunate girl, and a thin column of smoke rising straight up into the still air from the mouth of the gorge showed where the relations were performing the last rites of the Champawat man-eater's last victim, on the very spot on which the man-eater had been shot.

After dinner, while I was standing in the courtyard of the Tahsil, I saw a long procession of pine torches winding its way down the opposite hillside, and presently the chanting of a hill song by a great concourse of men was borne up on the still night air. An hour later, the tigress was laid down at my feet.

It was difficult to skin the animal with so many people crowding round, and to curtail the job I cut the head and paws from the trunk and left them adhering to the skin, to be dealt with later. A police guard was then mounted over the carcass, and next day, when all the people of the countryside were assembled, the trunk, legs and tail of the tigress were cut up into small pieces and distributed. These pieces of flesh and bone were required for the lockets which hill children wear round their necks, and the addition of a piece of tiger to the other potent charms is credited with giving the wearer courage, as well as immunity from the attacks of wild animals. The fingers of the girl which the tigress had swallowed whole were sent to me in spirits by the Tahsildar, and were buried by me in the Naini Tal lake close to the Nandadevi temples.

While I had been skinning the tigress the Tahsildar and his staff, assisted by the Headmen and greybeards of the surrounding villages and merchants of the Champawat bazaar, had been busy drawing up a programme for a great feast and dance for the morrow, at which I was to preside. Round about midnight, when the last of the great throng of men had left with shouts of delight at being able to use roads and village paths that the man-eater had closed for four years, I had a final smoke with the Tahsildar, and telling him that I could not stay any longer and that he would have to take my place at the festivities, my men and I set off on our seventy-five-mile journey, with two days in hand to do it in.

At sunrise I left my men and, with the tigress's skin strapped to the saddle of my horse, rode on ahead to put in a few hours in cleaning the skin at Dabidhura, where I intended spending the night. When passing the hut on the hill at Pali it occurred to me that it would be some little satisfaction to the dumb woman to know that her sister had been avenged, so leaving the horse to browse— he had been bred near the snow-line and could eat



anything from oak trees to nettles—I climbed the hill to the hut, and spread out the skin with the head supported on a stone facing the door. The children of the house had been round-eyed spectators of these proceedings and, hearing me talking to them, their mother, who was inside cooking, came to the door.

I am not going to hazard any theories about shock, and counter-shock, for I know nothing of these matters. All I know is that this woman, who was alleged to have been dumb a twelvemonth and who four days previously had made no attempt to answer any questions, was now running backwards and forwards from the hut to the road calling to her husband and the people in the village to come quickly and see what the sahib had brought. This sudden return of speech appeared greatly to mystify the children, who could not take their eyes off their mother's face.

I rested in the village while a dish of tea was being prepared for me and told the people who thronged round how the man-eater had been killed. An hour later I continued my journey and for half a mile along my way I could hear the shouts of goodwill of the men of Pali.

I had a very thrilling encounter with a leopard the following morning, which I only mention because it delayed my start from Dabidhura and put an extra strain on my small mount and myself. Fortunately the little pony was as strong on his legs as he was tough inside, and by holding his tail on the up-grades, riding him on the flat, and running behind him on the down-grades, we covered the forty-five miles to Naini Tal between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

At a durbar held in Naini Tal a few months later Sir John Hewett, Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, presented the Tahsildar of Champawat with a gun, and the man who accompanied me when I was looking for the girl with a beautiful hunting-knife, for the help they had given me. Both weapons were suitably engraved and will be handed down as heirlooms in the respective families.





## *Robin*

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I NEVER saw either of his parents. The Knight of the Broom I purchased him from said he was a spaniel, that his name was Pincha, and that his father was a 'keen gun dog'. This is all I can tell you about his pedigree.

I did not want a pup, and it was quite by accident that I happened to be with a friend when the litter of seven was decanted from a very filthy basket for her inspection. Pincha was the smallest and the thinnest of the litter, and it was quite evident he had reached the last ditch in his fight for survival. Leaving his little less miserable brothers and sisters, he walked once round me, and then curled himself up between my big feet. When I picked him up and put him inside my coat— it was a bitterly cold morning— he tried to show his gratitude by licking my face, and I tried to show him I was not aware of his appalling stench.

He was rising three months then, and I bought him for fifteen rupees. He is rising thirteen years now, and all the gold in India would not buy him.

When I got him home and he had made his first acquaintance with a square meal, warm water and soap, we scrapped his kennel name of Pincha and rechristened him Robin, in memory of a faithful old collie who had saved my young brother, aged four, and myself, aged six, from the attack of an infuriated she-bear.

Robin responded to regular meals as parched land does to rain, and after he had been with us for a few weeks, acting on the principle that a boy's and a pup's training cannot be started too early, I took him out one morning, intending to get a little away from him and fire a shot or two to get him used to the sound of gunfire.

At the lower end of our estate there are some dense thorn bushes, and while I was skirting round them a peafowl got up, and forgetting all about Robin, who was following at heel, I brought the bird fluttering down. It landed in the thorn bushes and Robin dashed in after it. The bushes were too thick and thorny for me to enter them, so I ran round to the far side where beyond the bushes was open ground, and beyond that again heavy tree and grass jungle which I knew the wounded bird would make for. The open ground was flooded with morning sunlight, and if I had been armed with a movie camera I should have had an opportunity of securing a unique picture. The peafowl, an old hen, with neck feathers stuck out at right angles, and one wing broken, was making for the tree jungle, while Robin, with stern to the ground, was hanging on to her tail and being dragged along. Running forward I very foolishly caught the bird by the neck and lifted it clear of the ground, whereon it promptly lashed out with both legs, and sent Robin heels-over-head. In a second he was up and on his feet again, and when I laid the dead bird down, he danced round it making little dabs alternately at its head and tail. The lesson was over for that morning, and as we returned home it would have been difficult to say which of us was the more proud— Robin, at bringing home his first bird, or I, at having picked a winner out of a filthy basket. The shooting season was now drawing to a close, and for the next few days Robin was not given anything larger than quail, doves and an occasional partridge to retrieve.

We spent the summer on the hills, and on our annual migration to the foothills in November, at the end of a long fifteen-mile march as we turned a sharp corner, one of a big troop of langurs jumped off the hillside and crossed the road a few inches in front of Robin's nose. Disregarding my whistle, Robin dashed down the roadside after the langur, which promptly sought safety in a tree. The ground was open with a few trees here and there, and after going steeply down for thirty or forty yards flattened out for a few yards, before going sharply down into the valley below. On the right-hand side of this flat ground there were a few bushes, with a deep channel scoured out by rain-water running through them. Robin had hardly entered these bushes when he was out again, and with ears laid back and tail tucked in was running for dear life, with an enormous leopard bounding after him and gaining on him at every bound. I was unarmed and all the assistance I could render was to ' Ho ' and ' Har ' at the full extent of my lungs. The men carrying M.'s dandy joined in lustily, the pandemonium reaching its climax when the hundred or more langurs added their alarm-calls in varying keys. For twenty-five or thirty yards the desperate and unequal race continued, and just as the leopard was within reach of Robin, it unaccountably swerved and disappeared into the valley, while Robin circled round a shoulder of the hill and rejoined us on the road. Two very useful lessons Robin learned from his hairbreadth escape, which he never in after-life forgot. First, that it was dangerous to chase langurs, and second that the alarm-call of a *langur* denoted the presence of a leopard.

Robin resumed his training where it had been interrupted in spring, but it soon became apparent that his early neglect and starvation had affected his heart, for he fainted now after the least exertion.

There is nothing more disappointing for a gun dog than to be left at home when his master goes out, and as bird-shooting was now taboo for Robin, I started taking him with me when I went out after big game. He took to this new form of sport as readily as a duck takes to water, and from then on has accompanied me whenever I have been out with a rifle.

The method we employ is to go out early in the morning, pick up the tracks of a leopard or tiger, and follow them. When the pug marks can be

seen, I do the tracking, and when the animal we are after takes to the jungle, Robin does the tracking. In this way we have on occasions followed an animal for miles before coming up with it.

When shooting on foot, it is very much easier to kill an animal outright than when shooting down on it from a machan, or from the back of an elephant. For one thing, when wounded animals have to be followed up on foot, chance shots are not indulged in, and for another, the vital parts are more accessible when shooting on the same level as the animal than when shooting down on it. However, even after exercising the greatest care over the shot, I have sometimes only wounded leopards and tigers, who have rampaged round before being quietened by a second or third shot, and only once during all the years that we have shot together has Robin left me in a tight corner. When he rejoined me after his brief absence that day, we decided that the incident was closed and would never be referred to again, but we are older now and possibly less sensitive, anyway Robin—who has exceeded the canine equivalent of three-score-years-and-ten, and who, lies at my feet as I write, on a bed he will never again leave—has with a smile from his wise brown eyes and a wag of his small stump of a tail given me permission to go ahead and tell you the story.

We did not see the leopard until it stepped clear of the thick undergrowth and, coming to a stand, looked back over its left shoulder.

He was an outsized male with a beautiful dark glossy coat, the rosettes on his skin standing out like clear-cut designs on a rich velvet ground. I had an unhurried shot with an accurate rifle at his right shoulder, at the short range of fifteen yards. By how little I missed his heart makes no matter, and while the bullet was kicking up the dust fifty yards away he was high in the air, and, turning a somersault, landed in the thick undergrowth he had a minute before left. For twenty, forty, fifty yards we heard him crashing through the cover, and then the sound ceased as abruptly as it had begun. This sudden cessation of sound could be accounted for in two ways: either the leopard had collapsed and died in his tracks, or fifty yards away he had reached open ground.

We had walked far that day; the sun was near setting and we were still four miles from home. This part of the jungle was not frequented by man, and there was not one chance in a million of anyone passing that way by night, and last, and the best reason of all for leaving the leopard, M. was unarmed and could neither be left alone nor taken along to follow up the wounded animal— so we turned to the north and made for home. There was no need for me to mark the spot, for I had walked through these jungles by day— and often by night— for near on half a century, and could have found my way blind-fold to any part of them.

Night had only just given place to day the following morning when Robin— who had not been with us the previous evening— and I arrived at the spot I had fired from. Very warily Robin, who was leading, examined the ground where the leopard had stood, and then raising his head and snuffing the air he advanced to the edge of the undergrowth, where the leopard in falling had left great splashes of blood. There was no need for me to examine the blood to determine the position of the wound, for at the short range I had fired at I had seen the bullet strike, and the spurt of dust on the far side was proof that the bullet had gone right through the leopard's body.

It might be necessary later on to follow up the blood trail, but just at present a little rest after our four-mile walk in the dark would do no harm, and might on the other hand prove of great value to us. The sun was near rising, and at that early hour of the morning all the jungle folk were on the move, and it would be advisable to hear what they had to say on the subject of the wounded animal before going further.

Under a nearby tree I found a dry spot to which the saturating dew had not penetrated, and with Robin stretched out at my feet had finished my cigarette when a chital hind, and then a second and a third, started calling some sixty yards to our left front. Robin sat up and slowly turning his head looked at me, and, on catching my eye, as slowly turned back in the direction of the calling deer. He had travelled far along the road of experience since that day he had first heard the alarm-call of a langur, and he knew now— as did every bird and animal within hearing— that the chital were warning the jungle folk of the presence of a leopard.

From the manner in which the chital were calling it was evident that the leopard was in full view of them. A little more patience and they would tell us if he was alive. They had been calling for about five minutes when suddenly, and all together, they called once and again, and then settled down to their regular call; the leopard was alive and had moved, and was now quiet again. All that we needed to know now was the position of the leopard, and this information we could get by stalking the chital.

Moving down-wind for fifty yards we entered the thick undergrowth, and started to stalk the deer not a difficult task, for Robin can move through any jungle as silently as a cat, and long practice has taught me where to place my feet. The chital were not visible until we were within a few feet of them. They were standing in the open and looking towards the north in the exact direction, as far as I was able to judge, in which the crashing sound of the evening before had ceased.

Up to this point the chital had been of great help to us; they had told us the leopard was lying out in the open and that it was alive, and they had now given us the direction. It had taken us the best part of an hour to acquire this information, and if the chital now caught sight of us and warned the jungle folk of our presence, they would in one second undo the good they had so far done. I was debating whether it would be better to retrace our steps and work down below the calling deer and try to get a shot from behind them, or move them from our vicinity by giving the call of a leopard, when one of the hinds turned her head and looked straight into my face. Next second, with a cry of 'Ware man', they dashed away at top speed. I had only about five yards to cover to reach the open ground, but quick as I was the leopard was quicker, and I was only in time to see his hind quarters and tail disappearing behind some bushes. The chital had very effectively spoilt my chance of a shot, and the leopard would now have to be located and marked down all over again—this time by Robin.

I stood on the open ground for some minutes, to give the leopard time to settle down and the scent he had left in his passage to blow past us, and then took Robin due west across the track of the wind, which was blowing from the north. We had gone about sixty or seventy yards when Robin, who was



leading, stopped and turned to face into the wind. Robin is mute in the jungles, and has a wonderful control over his nerves. There is one nerve, however, running down the back of his hind legs, which he cannot control when he is looking at a leopard, or when the scent of a leopard is warm and strong. This nerve was now twitching, and agitating the long hair on the upper part of his hind legs.

A very violent cyclonic storm had struck this part of the forest the previous summer, uprooting a number of trees; it was towards one of these fallen trees, forty yards from where we were standing, that Robin was now looking. The branches were towards us, and on either side of the trunk there were light bushes and a few scattered tufts of short grass.

At any other time Robin and I would have made straight for our quarry; but on this occasion a little extra caution was advisable. Not only were we dealing with an animal who when wounded knows no fear, but in addition we were dealing with a leopard who had had fifteen hours in which to nurse his grievance against man, and who could in consequence be counted on to have all his fighting instincts thoroughly aroused.

When leaving home that morning I had picked up the .275 rifle I had used the previous evening. A good rifle to carry when miles have to be covered, but not the weapon one would select to deal with a wounded leopard; so instead of a direct approach, I picked a line that would take us fifteen yards from, and parallel to, the fallen tree. Step by step, Robin leading, we moved along this line, and had passed the branches and were opposite the trunk when Robin stopped. Taking the direction from him, I presently saw what had attracted his attention— the tip of the leopard's tail slowly raised, and as slowly lowered— the warning a leopard invariably gives before charging. Pivoting to the right on my heels, I had just got the rifle to my shoulder when the leopard burst through the intervening bushes and sprang at us. My bullet, fired more with the object of deflecting him than with any hope of killing or even hitting him, passed under his belly and went through the fleshy part of his left thigh. The crack of the rifle, more than the wound, had the effect of deflecting the leopard sufficiently to make

him pass my right shoulder without touching me, and before I could get in another shot, he disappeared into the bushes beyond.

Robin had not moved from my feet, and together we now examined the ground the leopard had passed over. Blood we found in plenty, but whether it had come from the old wounds torn open by the leopard's violent exertions, or from my recent shot, it was impossible to say. Anyway it made no difference to Robin, who without a moment's hesitation took up the trail. After going through some very heavy cover we came on knee-high undergrowth, and had proceeded about a couple of hundred yards when I saw the leopard get up in front of us, and before I could get the rifle to bear on him, he disappeared under a lantana bush. This bush with its branches resting on the ground was as big as a cottage tent, and in addition to affording the leopard ideal cover gave him all the advantages for launching his next attack.

Robin and I had come very well out of our morning's adventure and it would have been foolish now, armed as I was, to pursue the leopard further, so without more ado we turned about and made for home.

Next morning we were back on the ground. From a very early hour Robin had been agitating to make a start, and, ignoring all the interesting smells the jungle holds in the morning, would have made me do the four miles at a run had that been possible.

I had armed myself with a 450/400, and was in consequence feeling much happier than I had done the previous day. When we were several hundred yards from the lantana bush, I made Robin slow down and advance cautiously, for it is never safe to assume that a wounded animal will be found where it has been left hours previously, as the following regrettable incident shows.

A sportsman of my acquaintance wounded a tiger one afternoon, and followed the blood trail for several miles along a valley. Next morning, accompanied by a number of men, one of whom was carrying his empty rifle and leading the way, he set out intending to take up the tracking where

he had left off. His way led over the previous day's blood trail, and while still a mile from the spot where the tiger had been left, the leading man, who incidentally was the local shikari, walked on to the wounded tiger and was killed. The rest of the party escaped, some by climbing trees and others by showing a clean pair of heels.

I had marked the exact position of the lantana bush, and now took Robin along a line that would pass a few yards on the lee side of it. Robin knew all that was worth knowing about this method of locating the position of an animal by cutting across the wind, and we had only gone a short distance, and were still a hundred yards from the bush, when he stopped, turned and faced into the wind, and communicated to me that he could smell the leopard. As on the previous day, he was facing a fallen tree which was lying along the edge of, and parallel to, the thick undergrowth through which we had followed the leopard to the lantana bush after he had charged us. On our side of the tree the ground was open, but on the far side there was a dense growth of waist-high basonta bushes. Having signalled to Robin to carry on along our original line, we went past the lantana bush, in which he showed no interest, to a channel washed out by rain-water. Here, removing my coat, I filled it with as many stones as the stitches would hold, and with this improvised sack slung over my shoulder returned to the open ground near the tree.

Resuming my coat, and holding the rifle ready for instant use, I took up a position fifteen yards from the tree and started throwing the stones, first on to the tree and then into the bushes on the far side of it with the object of making the leopard— assuming he was still alive— charge on to the open ground where I could deal with him. When all my ammunition was exhausted I coughed, clapped my hands, and shouted, and neither during the bombardment nor after it did the leopard move or make any sound to indicate that he was alive.

I should now have been justified in walking straight up to the tree and looking on the far side of it, but remembering an old jungle saying, 'It is never safe to assume that a leopard is dead until it has been skinned', I set out to circle round the tree, intending to reduce the size of the circle until I

could see right under the branches and along the whole length of the trunk. I made the radius of the first circle about twenty-five yards, and had gone two-thirds of the way round when Robin stopped. As I looked down to see what had attracted his attention, there was a succession of deep-throated, angry grunts, and the leopard made straight for us. All I could see was the undergrowth being violently agitated in a direct line towards us, and I only just had time to swing half right and bring the rifle up, when the head and shoulders of the leopard appeared out of the bushes a few feet away.



The leopard's spring and my shot were simultaneous, and side-stepping to the left and leaning back as far as I could I fired the second barrel from my hip into his side as he passed me.

When a wounded animal, be he leopard or tiger, makes a headlong charge and fails to contact he invariably carries on and does not return to the attack until he is again disturbed.

I had side-stepped to the left to avoid crushing Robin, and when I looked down for him now, he was nowhere to be seen. For the first time in all the years we had hunted together we had parted company in a tight corner, and he was now probably trying to find his way home, with very little chance of being able to avoid the many dangers that lay before him in the intervening four miles of jungle. Added to the natural dangers he would have to face in a jungle with which, owing to its remoteness from home, he was not familiar, was the weak condition of his heart. And it was therefore with very great misgivings that I turned about to go in search of him; as I did so, I caught sight of his head projecting from behind a tree trunk at the edge of a small clearing only a hundred yards away. When I raised my hand and beckoned, he disappeared into the undergrowth, but a little later, with drooped eyes and drooping ears, he crept silently to my feet. Laying down the rifle I picked him up in my arms and, for the second time in his life, he licked my face—telling me as he did so, with little throaty sounds, how glad he was to find me unhurt, and how terribly ashamed he was of himself for having parted company from me.

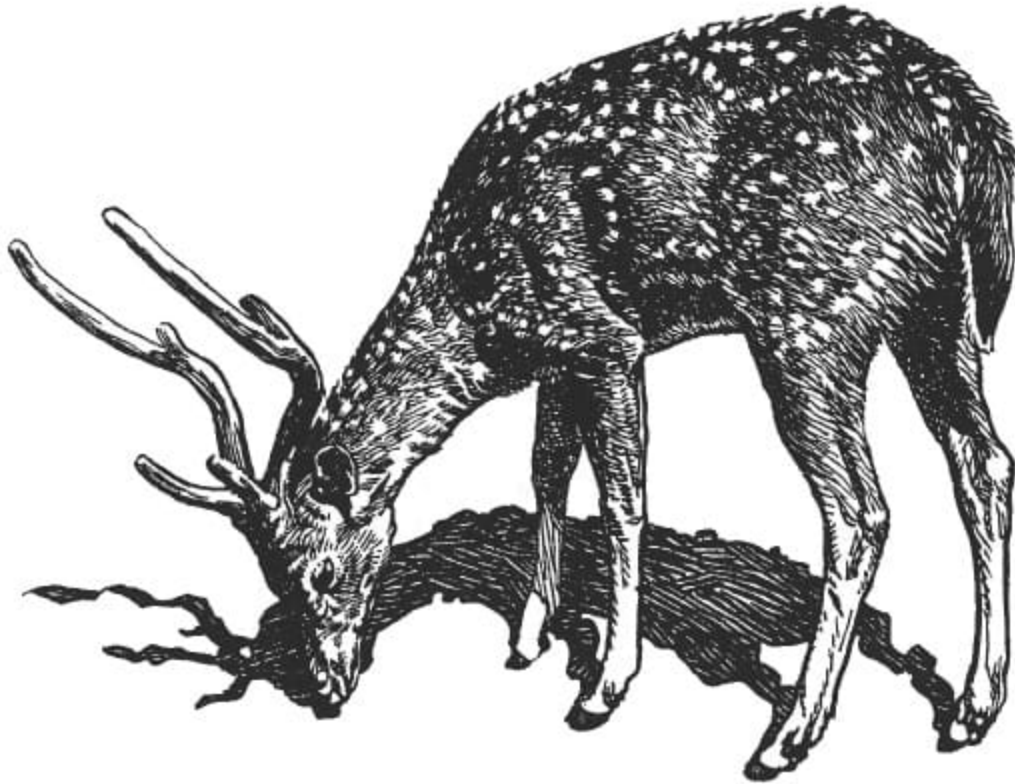
Our reactions to the sudden and quite unexpected danger that had confronted us were typical of how a canine and a human being act in an emergency, when the danger that threatens is heard, and not seen. In Robin's case it had impelled him to seek safety in silent and rapid retreat; whereas in my case it had the effect of gluing my feet to the ground and making retreat—rapid or otherwise—impossible.

When I had satisfied Robin that he was not to blame for our temporary separation, and his small body had stopped trembling, I put him down and

together we walked up to where the leopard, who had put up such a game fight, and had so nearly won the last round, was lying dead.

I have told you the story, and while I have been telling it Robin— the biggest-hearted and the most faithful friend man ever had— has gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds, where I know I shall find him waiting for me.





## *The Chowgarh Tigers*

### I

THE map of Eastern Kumaon that hangs on the wall before me is marked with a number of crosses, and below each cross is a date.

These crosses indicate the locality, and the date, of the officially recorded human victims of the man-eating tiger of Chowgarh. There are sixty-four crosses on the map. I do not claim this as being a correct tally, for the map was posted up by me for two years and during this period all kills were not reported to me; further, victims who were only mauled, and who died subsequently, have not been awarded a cross and a date.

The first cross is dated 15 December 1925, and the last, 21 March 1930. The distance between the extreme crosses, north to south, is fifty miles, and



east to west, thirty miles, an area of 1,500 square miles of mountain and vale where the snow lies deep during winter, and the valleys are scorching hot in summer. Over this area the Chowgarh tiger had established a reign of terror. Villages of varying size, some with a population of a hundred or more, and others with only a small family or two, are scattered throughout the area. Footpaths, beaten hard by bare feet, connect the villages. Some of these paths pass through thick forests, and when a man-eater renders their passage dangerous inter-village communication is carried on by shouting. Standing on a commanding point, maybe a big rock or the roof of a house, a man cooees to attract the attention of the people in a neighbouring village, and when the cooe is answered, the message is shouted across in a high-pitched voice. From village to village the message is tossed, and is broadcast throughout large areas in an incredibly short space of time.

It was at a District Conference in February 1929 that I found myself committed to have a try for this tiger. There were at that time three man-eaters in the Kumaon Division, and as the Chowgarh tiger had done most damage I promised to go in pursuit of it first.

The map with the crosses and dates, furnished to me by Government, showed that the man-eater was most active in the villages on the north and east face of the Kala Agar ridge. This ridge, some forty miles in length, rises to a height of 8,500 feet and is thickly wooded along the crest. A forest road runs along the north face of the ridge, in some places passing for miles through dense forests of oak and rhododendron, and in others forming a boundary between the forest and cultivated land. In one place the road forms a loop, and in this loop is situated the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow. This bungalow was my objective, and after a four days' march, culminating in a stiff climb of 4,000 feet, I arrived at it one evening in April 1929. The last human victim in this area was a young man of twenty-two, who had been killed while out grazing cattle, and while I was having breakfast, the morning after my arrival, the grandmother of the young man came to see me.

#### HUMAN BEINGS KILLED BY THE CHOWGARH MAN-EATER

<i>Village</i>	<i>Number</i>
THALI .....	1
DEBOURA .....	1
BARHON .....	2
CHAMOLI .....	6
KAHOR .....	1
AM .....	2
DALKANIA .....	7
LOHAR .....	8
AHGAURA .....	2
PAHARPANI .....	1
PADAMPURI .....	2
TANDA .....	1
NESORIYA .....	1
JHANGAON .....	1
KABRAGAON .....	1
KALA AGAR .....	8
RIKHAKOT .....	1
MATELA .....	3
KUNDAL .....	3
BABYAR .....	1
KHANSIUN .....	1
GARGARI .....	1
HAIRAKRAN .....	2
UKHALDHUNGA .....	1
PAKHARI .....	1
DUNGARI .....	2
GALNI .....	3

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## ANNUAL TOTALS

1926	15 KILLED
1927	9 KILLED
1928	14 KILLED
1929	17 KILLED
1930	9 KILLED

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TOTAL 64

She informed me that the man-eater had, without any provocation, killed the only relative she had in the world. After giving me her grandson's history from the day he was born, and extolling his virtues, she pressed me to accept her three milch buffaloes to use as bait for the tiger, saying that if I killed the tiger with the help of her buffaloes she would have the satisfaction of feeling that she had assisted in avenging her grandson. These full-grown animals were of no use to me, but knowing that refusal to accept them would give offence, I thanked the old lady and assured her I would draw on her for bait as soon as I had used up the four young male buffaloes I had brought with me from Naini Tal. The Headmen of nearby villages had now assembled, and from them I learned that the tiger had last been seen ten days previously in a village twenty miles away, on the eastern slope of the ridge, where it had killed and eaten a man and his wife.

A trail ten days old was not worth following up, and after a long discussion with the Headmen I decided to make for Dalkania village on the eastern side of the ridge. Dalkania is ten miles from Kala Agar, and about the same distance from the village where the man and his wife had been killed.

From the number of crosses Dalkania and the villages adjoining it had earned, it appeared that the tiger had its headquarters in the vicinity of these villages.

After breakfast next morning I left Kala Agar and followed the forest road, which I was informed would take me to the end of the ridge, where I should have to leave the road and take a path two miles downhill to Dalkania. This road, running right to the end of the ridge through dense forest was very little used, and, examining it for tracks as I went along, I arrived at the point where the path took off at about 2 p.m. Here I met a number of men from Dalkania. They had heard— via the cooe method of communication— of my intention of camping at their village and had come up to the ridge to inform me that the tiger had that morning attacked a party of women, while they had been cutting their crops in a village ten miles to the north of Dalkania.

The men carrying my camp equipment had done eight miles and were quite willing to carry on, but on learning from the villagers that the path to this village, ten miles away, was very rough and ran through dense forest I decided to send my men with the villagers to Dalkania, and visit the scene of the tiger's attack alone. My servant immediately set about preparing a substantial meal for me, and at 3 p.m., having fortified myself, I set out on my ten-mile walk. Ten miles under favourable conditions is a comfortable two-and-a-half hours' walk, but here the conditions were anything but favourable. The track running along the east face of the hill wound in and out through deep ravines and was bordered alternately by rocks, dense undergrowth, and trees; and when every obstruction capable of concealing sudden death, in the form of a hungry man-eater, had to be approached with caution, progress was of necessity slow. I was still several miles from my objective when the declining day warned me it was time to call a halt.

In any other area, sleeping under the stars on a bed of dry leaves would have ensured a restful night, but here, to sleep on the ground would have been to court death in a very unpleasant form. Long practice in selecting a suitable tree, and the ability to dispose myself comfortably in it, has made sleeping up aloft a simple matter. On this occasion I selected an oak tree,

and, with the rifle tied securely to a branch, had been asleep for some hours when I was awakened by the rustling of several animals under the tree. The sound moved on, and presently I heard the scraping of claws on bark and realized that a family of bears were climbing some karphal trees (Karphal is found on our hills at an elevation of 6,000 feet. The tree grows to a height of about forty feet and produces a small red and very sweet berry, which is greatly fancied by both human beings and bears.) I had noticed growing a little way down the hillside. Bears are very quarrelsome when feeding, and sleep was impossible until they had eaten their fill and moved on.

The sun had been up a couple of hours when I arrived at the village, which consisted of two huts and a cattle-shed, in a clearing of five acres surrounded by forest. The small community were in a state of terror and were overjoyed to see me. The wheatfield, a few yards from the huts, where the tiger, with belly to ground, had been detected only just in time, stalking the three women cutting the crop, was eagerly pointed out to me. The man who had seen the tiger, and given the alarm, told me the tiger had retreated into the jungle, where it had been joined by a second tiger, and that the two animals had gone down the hillside into the valley below. The occupants of the two huts had had no sleep, for the tigers, baulked of their prey, had called at short intervals throughout the night, and had only ceased calling a little before my arrival. This statement, that there were two tigers, confirmed the reports I had already received that the man-eater was accompanied by a full-grown cub.

Our hill folk are very hospitable, and when the villagers learned that I had spent the night in the jungle, and that my camp was at Dalkania, they offered to prepare a meal for me. This I knew would strain the resources of the small community, so I asked for a dish of tea, but as there was no tea in the village I was given a drink of fresh milk sweetened to excess with jaggery, a very satisfying and not unpleasant drink— when one gets used to it. At the request of my hosts I mounted guard while the remaining portion of the wheat crop was cut; and at midday, taking the good wishes of the people with me, I went down into the valley in the direction in which the tigers had been heard calling.

The valley, starting from the watershed of the three rivers Ladhya, Nandhour and Eastern Goula, runs south-west for twenty miles and is densely wooded. Tracking was impossible, and my only hope of seeing the tigers was to attract them to myself, or helped by the jungle folk to stalk them.

To those of you who may be inclined to indulge in the sport of man-eater hunting on foot, it will be of interest to know that the birds and animals of the jungle, and the four winds of heaven, play a very important part in this form of sport. This is not the place to give the names of the jungle folk on whose alarm-calls the sportsman depends, to a great extent, for his safety and knowledge of his quarry's movements; for in a country in which a walk up or down hill of three or four miles might mean a difference in altitude of as many thousand feet the variation in fauna, in a well-stocked area, is considerable. The wind, however, at all altitudes, remains a constant factor, and a few words relevant to its importance in connexion with man-eater hunting on foot will not be out of place.

Tigers do not know that human beings have no sense of smell, and when a tiger becomes a man-eater it treats human beings exactly as it treats wild animals, that is, it approaches its intended victims up-wind, or lies up in wait for them down-wind.

The significance of this will be apparent when it is realized that, while the sportsman is trying to get a sight of the tiger, the tiger in all probability is trying to stalk the sportsman, or is lying up in wait for him. The contest, owing to the tiger's height, colouring, and ability to move without making a sound, would be very unequal were it not for the wind-factor operating in favour of the sportsman.

In all cases where killing is done by stalking or stealth, the victim is approached from behind. This being so, it would be suicidal for the sportsman to enter dense jungle, in which he had every reason to believe a man-eater was lurking, unless he was capable of making full use of the currents of air. For example, assuming that the sportsman has to proceed, owing to the nature of the ground, in the direction from which the wind is

blowing, the danger would lie behind him, where he would be least able to deal with it, but by frequently tacking across the wind he could keep the danger alternately to right and left of him. In print this scheme may not appear very attractive, but in practice it works; and, short of walking backwards, I do not know of a better or safer method of going up-wind through dense cover in which a hungry man-eater is lurking.

By evening I had reached the upper end of the valley, without having seen the tigers and without having received any indication from bird or animal of their presence in the jungle. The only habitation then in sight was a cattle-shed, high up on the north side of the valley.

I was careful in the selection of a tree on this second night, and was rewarded by an undisturbed night's rest. Not long after dark the tigers called, and a few minutes later two shots from a muzzle-loader came echoing down the valley, followed by a lot of shouting from the graziers at the cattle station. Thereafter the night was silent.

By the afternoon of the following day I had explored every bit of the valley, and I was making my way up a grassy slope intent on rejoining my men at Dalkania when I heard a long-drawn-out cooe from the direction of the cattle-shed. The cooe was repeated once and again, and on my sending back an answering call I saw a man climb on a projecting rock, and from this vantage point he shouted across the valley to ask if I was the sahib who had come from Naini Tal to shoot the man-eater. On my telling him I was that sahib, he informed me that his cattle had stampeded out of a ravine on my side of the valley at about midday, and that when he counted them on arrival at the cattle station he found that one— a white cow— was missing.

He suspected that the cow had been killed by the tigers he had heard calling the previous night, half a mile to the west of where I was standing. Thanking him for his information, I set off to investigate the ravine. I had gone but a short distance along the edge of the ravine when I came on the tracks of the stampeding cattle, and following these tracks back I had no difficulty in finding the spot where the cow had been killed. After killing the cow the tigers had taken it down the steep hillside into the ravine. An

approach along the drag was not advisable, so going down into the valley I made a wide detour, and approached the spot where I expected the kill to be from the other side of the ravine. This side of the ravine was less steep than the side down which the kill had been taken, and was deep in young bracken— ideal ground for stalking over. Step by step, and as silently as a shadow, I made my way through the bracken, which reached above my waist, and when I was some thirty yards from the bed of the ravine a movement in front of me caught my eye. A white leg was suddenly thrust up into the air and violently agitated, and next moment there was a deep-throated growl— the tigers were on the kill and were having a difference of opinion over some toothful morsel.

For several minutes I stood perfectly still; the leg continued to be agitated, but the growl was not repeated. A nearer approach was not advisable, for even if I succeeded in covering the thirty yards without being seen, and managed to kill one of the tigers, the other, as likely as not, would blunder into me, and the ground I was on would give me no chance of defending myself. Twenty yards to my left front, and about the same distance from the tigers, there was an outcrop of rock, some ten to fifteen feet high. If I could reach this rock without being seen, I should in all probability get an easy shot at the tigers. Dropping on hands and knees, and pushing the rifle before me, I crawled through the bracken to the shelter of the rocks, paused a minute to regain my breath and make quite sure the rifle was loaded, and then climbed the rock. When my eyes were level with the top, I looked over, and saw the two tigers.

One was eating at the hind quarters of the cow, while the other was lying near by licking its paws. Both tigers appeared to be about the same size, but the one that was licking its paws was several shades lighter than the other; and concluding that her light colouring was due to age and that she was the old man-eater, I aligned the sights very carefully on her, and fired. At my shot she reared up and fell backwards, while the other bounded down the ravine and was out of sight before I could press the second trigger. The tiger I had shot did not move again, and after pelting it with stones to make sure it was dead, I approached and met with a great disappointment; for a glance at close quarters showed me I had made a mistake and shot the cub— a



mistake that during the ensuing twelve months cost the district fifteen lives and incidentally nearly cost me my own life.

Disappointment was to a certain extent mitigated by the thought that this young tigress, even if she had not actually killed any human beings herself, had probably assisted her old mother to kill (this assumption I later found to be correct), and in any case, having been nurtured on human flesh, she could—to salve my feelings—be classed as a potential man-eater.

Skinning a tiger with assistance on open ground and with the requisite appliances is an easy job, but here the job was anything but easy, for I was alone, surrounded by thick cover, and my only appliance was a penknife; and though there was no actual danger to be apprehended from the man-eater, for tigers never kill in excess of their requirements, there was the uneasy feeling in the back of my mind that the tigress had returned and was watching my every movement.

The sun was near setting before the arduous task was completed, and as I should have to spend yet another night in the jungles I decided to remain where I was. The tigress was a very old animal, as I could see from her pug marks, and having lived all her life in a district in which there are nearly as many fire-arms as men to use them, had nothing to learn about men and their ways. Even so, there was just a chance that she might return to the kill some time during the night, and remain in the vicinity until light came in the morning.

My selection of a tree was of necessity limited, and the one I spent that night in proved, by morning, to be the most uncomfortable tree I have ever spent twelve hours in. The tigress called at intervals throughout the night, and as morning drew near the calling became fainter and fainter, and eventually died away on the ridge above me.

Cramped, and stiff, and hungry—I had been without food for sixty-four hours—and with my clothes clinging to me—it had rained for an hour during the night—I descended from the tree when objects were clearly visible, and, after tying the tiger's skin up in a coat, set off for Dalkania.

I have never weighed a tiger's skin when green, and if the skin, plus the head and paws, which I carried for fifteen miles that day weighed 40 pounds at the start, I would have taken my oath it weighed 200 pounds before I reached my destination.

In a courtyard, flagged with great slabs of blue slate, and common to a dozen houses, I found my men in conference with a hundred or more villagers. My approach, along a yard-wide lane between two houses, had not been observed, and the welcome I received when, bedraggled and covered with blood, I staggered into the circle of squatting men will live in my memory as long as memory lasts.

My 40-lb. tent had been pitched in a field of stubble a hundred yards from the village, and I had hardly reached it before tea was laid out for me on a table improvised out of a couple of suitcases and planks borrowed from the village. I was told later by the villagers that my men, who had been with me for years and had accompanied me on several similar expeditions, refusing to believe that the man-eater had claimed me as a victim, had kept a kettle on the boil night and day in anticipation of my return, and, further, had stoutly opposed the Headmen of Dalkania and the adjoining villages sending a report to Almora and Naini Tal that I was missing.

A hot bath, taken of necessity in the open and in full view of the village — I was too dirty and too tired to care who saw me — was followed by an ample dinner, and I was thinking of turning in for the night when a flash of lightning succeeded by a loud peal of thunder heralded the approach of a storm. Tent-pegs are of little use in a field, so long stakes were hurriedly procured and securely driven into the ground, and to these stakes the tent-ropes were tied. For further safety all the available ropes in camp were criss-crossed over the tent and lashed to the stakes. The storm of wind and rain lasted an hour and was one of the worst the little tent had ever weathered. Several of the guy-ropes were torn from the canvas, but the stakes and criss-cross ropes held. Most of my things were soaked through, and a little stream several inches deep was running from end to end of the tent; my bed, however, was comparatively dry, and by 10 o'clock my men

were safely lodged behind locked doors in the house the villagers had placed at their disposal, while I, with a loaded rifle for company, settled down to a sleep which lasted for twelve hours.

The following day was occupied in drying my kit and in cleaning and pegging out the tiger's skin. While these operations were in progress the villagers, who had taken a holiday from their field work, crowded round to hear my experiences and to tell me theirs. Every man present had lost one or more relatives, and several bore tooth and claw marks, inflicted by the man-eater, which they will carry to their graves. My regret at having lost an opportunity of killing the man-eater was not endorsed by the assembled men. True, there had originally been only one man-eater; but, of recent months, rescue parties who had gone out to recover the remains of human victims had found two tigers on the kills, and only a fortnight previously a man and his wife had been killed simultaneously, which was proof sufficient for them that both tigers were established man-eaters.

My tent was on a spur of the hill, and commanded an extensive view. Immediately below me was the valley of the Nandhour river, with a hill, devoid of any cultivation, rising to a height of 9,000 feet on the far side. As I sat on the edge of the terraced fields that evening with a pair of good binoculars in my hand and the Government map spread out beside me, the villagers pointed out the exact positions where twenty human beings had been killed during the past three years. These kills were more or less evenly distributed over an area of forty square miles.

The forests in this area were open to grazing, and on the cattle-paths leading to them I decided to tie up my four young buffaloes.

During the following ten days no news was received of the tigress, and I spent the time in visiting the buffaloes in the morning, searching the forests in the day, and tying out the buffaloes in the evening. On the eleventh day my hopes were raised by the report that a cow had been killed on a ravine on the hill above my tent. A visit to the kill, however, satisfied me the cow had been killed by an old leopard, whose pug marks I had repeatedly seen. The villagers complained that the leopard had for several years been taking

heavy toll of their cattle and goats, so I decided to sit up for him. A shallow cave close to the dead cow gave me the cover I needed. I had not been long in the cave when I caught sight of the leopard coming down the opposite side of the ravine, and I was raising my rifle for a shot when I heard a very agitated voice from the direction of the village calling to me.

There could be but one reason for this urgent call, and grabbing up my hat I dashed out of the cave, much to the consternation of the leopard, who first flattened himself out on the ground, and then with an angry woof went bounding back the way he had come, while I scrambled up my side of the ravine; and, arriving at the top, shouted to the man that I was coming, and set off at top speed to join him.

The man had run all the way uphill from the village, and when he regained his breath he informed me that a woman had just been killed by the man-eater, about half a mile on the far side of the village. As we ran down the hillside I saw a crowd of people collected in the courtyard already alluded to. Once again my approach through the narrow lane was not observed, and looking over the heads of the assembled men, I saw a girl sitting on the ground.

The upper part of her clothing had been torn off her young body, and with head thrown back and hands resting on the ground behind to support her, she sat without sound or movement, other than the heaving up and down of her breast, in the hollow of which the blood, that was flowing down her face and neck, was collecting in a sticky congealed mass.

My presence was soon detected and a way made for me to approach the girl. While I was examining her wounds, a score of people, all talking at the same time, informed me that the attack on the girl had been made on comparatively open ground in full view of a number of people including the girl's husband; that alarmed at their combined shouts the tiger had left the girl and gone off in the direction of the forest; that leaving the girl for dead where she had fallen her companions had run back to the village to inform me; that subsequently the girl had regained consciousness and returned to the village; that she would without doubt die of her injuries in a few

minutes; and that they would then carry her back to the scene of the attack, and I could sit up over the corpse and shoot the tiger.

While this information was being imparted to me the girl's eyes never left my face and followed my every movement with the liquid pleading gaze of a wounded and frightened animal. Room to move unhampered, quiet to collect my wits, and clean air for the girl to breathe were necessary, and I am afraid the methods I employed to gain them were not as gentle as they might have been. When the last of the men had left in a hurry, I set the women, who up to now had remained in the background, to warming water and to tearing my shirt, which was comparatively clean and dry, into bandages, while one girl, who appeared to be on the point of getting hysterics, was bundled off to scour the village for a pair of scissors. The water and bandages were ready before the girl I had sent for the scissors returned with the only pair, she said, the village could produce. They had been found in the house of a tailor, long since dead, and had been used by the widow for digging up potatoes. The rusty blades, some eight inches long, could not be made to meet at any point, and after a vain attempt I decided to leave the thick coils of blood-caked hair alone.

The major wounds consisted of two claw cuts, one starting between the eyes and extending right over the head and down to the nape of the neck, leaving the scalp hanging in two halves, and the other, starting near the first, running across the forehead up to the right ear. In addition to these ugly gaping wounds there were a number of deep scratches on the right breast, right shoulder and neck, and one deep cut on the back of the right hand, evidently inflicted when the girl had put up her hand in a vain attempt to shield her head.

A doctor friend whom I had once taken out tiger-shooting on foot had, on our return after an exciting morning, presented me with a two-ounce bottle of yellow fluid which he advised me to carry whenever I went out shooting. I had carried the bottle in the inner pocket of my shooting jacket for over a year and a portion of the fluid had evaporated; but the bottle was still three-parts full, and after I had washed the girl's head and body I knocked the neck off the bottle and poured the contents, to the last drop, into the

wounds. This done I bandaged the head, to try to keep the scalp in position, and then picked up the girl and carried her to her home— a single room combining living quarters, kitchen and nursery— with the women following behind.

Dependent from a rafter near the door was an open basket, the occupant of which was now clamouring to be fed. This was a complication with which I could not deal, so I left the solution of it to the assembled women. Ten days later, when on the eve of my departure I visited the girl for the last time, I found her sitting on the doorstep of her home with the baby asleep in her lap.

Her wounds, except for a sore at the nape of her neck where the tiger's claws had sunk deepest into the flesh, were all healed, and when parting her great wealth of raven-black hair to show me where the scalp had made a perfect join, she said, with a smile, that she was very glad her young sister had— quite by mistake— borrowed the wrong pair of scissors from the tailor's widow (for a shorn head here is the sign of widowhood). If these lines should ever be read by my friend the doctor I should like him to know that the little bottle of yellow fluid he so thoughtfully provided for me, saved the life of a very brave young mother.

While I had been attending to the girl my men had procured a goat. Following back the blood trail made by the girl I found the spot where the attack had taken place, and tying the goat to a bush I climbed into a stunted oak, the only tree in the vicinity, and prepared for an all-night vigil. Sleep, even in snatches, was not possible, for my seat was only a few feet from the ground, and the tigress was still without her dinner. However, I neither saw nor heard anything throughout the night.

On examining the ground in the morning— I had not had time to do this the previous evening— I found that the tigress, after attacking the girl, had gone up the valley for half a mile to where a cattle track crossed the Nandhour river. This track it had followed for two miles, to its junction with the forest road on the ridge above Dalkania. Here on the hard ground I lost the tracks.

For two days the people in all the surrounding villages kept as close to their habitations as the want of sanitary conveniences permitted, and then on the third day news was brought to me by four runners that the man-eater had claimed a victim at Lohali, a village five miles to the south of Dalkania. The runners stated that the distance by the forest road was ten miles, but only five by a short cut by which they proposed taking me back. My preparations were soon made, and a little after midday I set off with my four guides.

A very stiff climb of two miles brought us to the crest of the long ridge south of Dalkania and in view of the valley three miles below, where the 'kill' was reported to have taken place. My guides could give me no particulars. They lived in a small village a mile on the near side of Lohali, and at 10 a.m. a message had come to them— in the manner already described— that a woman of Lohali had been killed by the man-eater, and they were instructed to convey this information to me at Dalkania.

The top of the hill on which we were standing was bare of trees, and, while I regained my breath and had a smoke, my companions pointed out the landmarks. Close to where we were resting, and under the shelter of a great rock, there was a small ruined hut, with a circular thorn enclosure near by. Questioned about this hut, the men told me the following story. Four years previously a Bhutia (a man from across the border), who had all the winter been sending packages of gur, salt, and other commodities from the bazaars at the foothills into the interior of the district, had built the hut with the object of resting and fattening his flock of goats through the summer and rains, and getting them fit for the next winter's work. After a few weeks the goats wandered down the hill and damaged my informants' crops, and when they came up to lodge a protest, they found the hut empty, and the fierce sheepdog these men invariably keep with them, to guard their camps at night, chained to an iron stake and dead. Foul play was suspected, and next day men were collected from adjoining villages and a search organized. Pointing to an oak tree scored by lightning and distant some four hundred yards, my informants said that under it the remains of the man— his skull and a few splinters of bone— and his clothes had been found. This was the Chowgarh man-eater's first human victim.

There was no way of descending the precipitous hill from where we were sitting, and the men informed me we should have to proceed half a mile along the ridge to where we should find a very steep and rough track which would take us straight down, past their village, to Lohali, which we could see in the valley below. We had covered about half the distance we had to go along the ridge, when all at once, and without being able to ascribe any reason for it, I felt we were being followed. Arguing with myself against this feeling was of no avail; there was only one man-eater in all this area and she had procured a kill three miles away which she was not likely to leave. However, the uneasy feeling persisted, and as we were now at the widest part of the grassy ridge I made the men sit down, instructing them not to move until I returned, and myself set out on a tour of investigation. Retracing my steps to where we had first come out on the ridge I entered the jungle, and carefully worked round the open ground and back to where the men were sitting. No alarm-call of animal or bird indicated that a tiger was anywhere in the vicinity, but from there on I made the four men walk in front of me, while I brought up the rear, with thumb on safety-catch and a constant lookout behind.

When we arrived at the little village my companions had started from, they asked for permission to leave me. I was very glad of this request, for I had a mile of dense scrub jungle to go through, and though the feeling that I was being followed had long since left me, I felt safer and more comfortable with only my own life to guard. A little below the outlying terraced fields, and where the dense scrub started, there was a crystal-clear spring of water, from which the village drew its water-supply. Here in the soft wet ground I found the fresh pug marks of the man-eater.

These pug marks, coming from the direction of the village I was making for, coupled with the uneasy feeling I had experienced on the ridge above, convinced me that something had gone wrong with the 'kill' and that my quest would be fruitless. As I emerged from the scrub jungle I came in view of Lohali, which consisted of five or six small houses. Near the door of one of these houses a group of people were collected.



My approach over the steep open ground and narrow terraced fields was observed, and a few men detached themselves from the group near the door and advanced to meet me. One of the number, an old man, bent down to touch my feet, and with tears streaming down his cheeks implored me to save the life of his daughter. His story was as short as it was tragic. His daughter, who was a widow and the only relative he had in the world, had gone out at about ten o'clock to collect dry sticks with which to cook their midday meal. A small stream flows through the valley, and on the far side of the stream from the village the hill goes steeply up. On the lower slope of this hill there are a few terraced fields. At the edge of the lowest field, and distant about 150 yards from the home, the woman had started to collect sticks. A little later, some women who were washing their clothes in the stream heard a scream, and on looking up saw the woman and a tiger disappearing together into the dense thorn bushes, which extended from the edge of the field right down to the stream. Dashing back to the village, the women raised an alarm. The frightened villagers made no attempt at a rescue, and a message for help was shouted to a village higher up the valley, from where it was tossed back to the village from which the four men had set out to find me. Half an hour after the message had been sent, the wounded woman crawled home. Her story was that she had seen the tiger just as it was about to spring on her, and as there was no time to run, she had jumped down the almost perpendicular hillside and while she was in the air the tiger had caught her and they had gone down the hill together. She remembered nothing further until she regained consciousness and found herself near the stream; and being unable to call for help, she had crawled back to the village on her hands and knees.

We had reached the door of the house while this tale was being told. Making the people stand back from the door—the only opening in the four walls of the room—I drew the blood-stained sheet off the woman, whose pitiful condition I am not going to attempt to describe. Had I been a qualified doctor, armed with modern appliances, instead of just a mere man with a little permanganate of potash in his pocket, I do not think it would have been possible to have saved the woman's life; for the deep tooth and claw wounds in her face, neck, and other parts of her body had, in that hot unventilated room, already turned septic. Mercifully she was only semi-

conscious. The old father had followed me into the room, and, more for his satisfaction than for any good I thought it would do, I washed the caked blood from the woman's head and body, and cleaned out the wounds as best I could with my handkerchief and a strong solution of permanganate.

It was now too late to think of returning to my camp, and a place would have to be found in which to pass the night. A little way up the stream, and not far from where the women had been washing their clothes, there was a giant pipal tree, with a foot-high masonry platform round it used by the villagers for religious ceremonies.

I undressed on the platform and bathed in the stream; and when the wind had carried out the functions of a towel, dressed again, put my back to the tree and, laying the loaded rifle by my side, prepared to see the night out. Admittedly it was an unsuitable place in which to spend the night, but any place was preferable to the village, and that dark room, with its hot fetid atmosphere and swarm of buzzing flies, where a woman in torment fought desperately for breath.

During the night the wailing of women announced that the sufferer's troubles were over, and when I passed through the village at day break preparations for the funeral were well advanced.

From the experience of this unfortunate woman, and that of the girl at Dalkania, it was now evident that the old tigress had depended, to a very great extent, on her cub to kill the human beings she attacked. Usually only one out of every hundred people attacked by man-eating tigers escapes, but in the case of this man-eater it was apparent that more people would be mauled than killed outright, and as the nearest hospital was fifty miles away, when I returned to Naini Tal I appealed to Government to send a supply of disinfectants and dressings to all the Headmen of villages in the area in which the man-eater was operating. On my subsequent visit I was glad to learn that the request had been complied with, and that the disinfectants had saved the lives of a number of people.

I stayed at Dalkania for another week and announced on a Saturday that I would leave for home the following Monday. I had now been in the man-eater's domain for close on a month, and the constant strain of sleeping in an open tent, and of walking endless miles during the day with the prospect of every step being the last, was beginning to tell on my nerves. The villagers received my announcement with consternation, and only desisted from trying to make me change my decision when I promised them I would return at the first opportunity.

After breakfast on Sunday morning the Headmen of Dalkania paid me a visit and requested me to shoot them some game before I left. The request was gladly acceded to, and half an hour later, accompanied by four villagers and one of my own men, and armed with a .275 rifle and a clip of cartridges, I set off for the hill on the far side of the Nandhour river, on the upper slopes of which I had, from my camp, frequently seen *ghooral* feeding.

One of the villagers accompanying me was a tall gaunt man with a terribly disfigured face. He had been a constant visitor to my camp, and finding in me a good listener had told and retold his encounter with the man-eater so often that I could, without effort, repeat the whole story in my sleep. The encounter had taken place four years previously and is best told in his own words.

‘Do you see that pine tree, sahib, at the bottom of the grassy slope on the shoulder of the hill? Yes, the pine tree with a big white rock to the east of it. Well, it was at the upper edge of the grassy slope that the man-eater attacked me. The grassy slope is as perpendicular as the wall of a house, and none but a hillman could find foothold on it. My son, who was eight years of age at the time, and I had cut grass on that slope on the day of my misfortune, carrying the grass up in armfuls to the belt of trees where the ground is level.

‘I was stooping down at the very edge of the slope, tying the grass into a big bundle, when the tiger sprang at me and buried its teeth, one under my right eye, one in my chin and the other two here at the back of my neck.

The tiger's mouth struck me with a great blow and I fell over on my back, while the tiger lay on top of me chest to chest, with its stomach between my legs. When falling backwards I had flung out my arms and my right hand had come in contact with an oak sapling. As my fingers grasped the sapling, an idea came to me. My legs were free, and if I could draw them up and insert my feet under and against the tiger's belly, I might be able to push the tiger off, and run away. The pain, as the tiger crushed all the bones on the right side of my face, was terrible; but I did not lose consciousness, for you see, sahib, at that time I was a young man, and in all the hills there was no one to compare with me in strength. Very slowly, so as not to anger the tiger I drew my legs up on either side of it, and gently inserted my bare feet against its belly. Then placing my left hand against its chest and pushing and kicking upwards with all my might, I lifted the tiger right off the ground and, we being on the very edge of the perpendicular hillside, the tiger went crashing down and belike would have taken me with him, had my hold on the sapling not been a good one.

'My son had been too frightened to run away, and when the tiger had gone, I took his loincloth from him and wrapped it round my head, and holding his hand I walked back to the village. Arrived at my home I told my wife to call all my friends together, for I wished to see their faces before I died. When my friends were assembled and saw my condition, they wanted to put me on a charpoy and carry me fifty miles to the Almora hospital, but this I would not consent to; for my suffering was great, and being assured that my time had come, I wanted to die where I had been born, and where I had lived all my life. Water was brought, for I was thirsty and my head was on fire, but when it was poured into my mouth, it all flowed out through the holes in my neck. Thereafter, for a period beyond measure, there was great confusion in my mind, and much pain in my head and in my neck, and while I waited and longed for death to end my sufferings my wounds healed of themselves, and I became well.

'And now, sahib, I am as you see me, old and thin, and with white hair, and a face that no man can look on without repulsion. My enemy lives and continues to claim victims but do not be deceived into thinking it is a tiger, for it is no tiger but an evil spirit, who, when it craves for human flesh and

blood, takes on for a little while the semblance of a tiger. But they say you are a sadhu, sahib, and the spirits that guard sadhus are more powerful than this evil spirit, as is proved by the fact that you spent three days and three nights alone in the jungle, and came out— as your men said you would— alive and unhurt.'



Looking at the great frame of the man, it was easy to picture him as having been a veritable giant. And a giant in strength he must have been, for no man, unless he had been endowed with strength far above the average, could have lifted the tigress into the air, torn its hold from the side of his head, carrying away, as it did, half his face with it, and hurled it down the precipitous hill.

My gaunt friend constituted himself our guide, and with a beautifully polished axe, with long tapering handle, over his shoulder, led us by devious steep paths to the valley below. Fording the Nandhour river, we crossed several wide terraced fields, now gone out of cultivation for fear of the man-eater, and on reaching the foot of the hill started what proved to be a very stiff climb, through forest, to the grass slopes above. Gaunt my friend may have been, but he lacked nothing in wind, and tough as I was it was only by calling frequent halts— to admire the view— that I was able to keep up with him.

Emerging from the tree forest, we went diagonally across the grassy slope, in the direction of a rock cliff that extended upwards for a thousand feet or more. It was on this cliff, sprinkled over with tufts of short grass, that I had seen *ghooral* feeding from my tent. We had covered a few hundred yards when one of these small mountain-goats started up out of a ravine, and at my shot ‘crumpled up and slipped back out of sight. Alarmed by the report of the rifle, another *ghooral*, that had evidently been lying asleep at the foot of the cliff, sprang to his feet and went up the rock face, as only he or his big brother the tahr could have done. As he climbed upwards, I lay down and, putting the sight to 200 yards, waited for him to stop. This he presently did, coming out on a projecting rock to look down on us. At my shot he staggered, regained his footing, and very slowly continued his climb. At the second shot he fell, hung for a second or two on a narrow ledge, and then fell through space to the grassy slope from whence he had started. Striking the ground he rolled over and over, passing within a hundred yards of us, and eventually came to rest on a cattle track a hundred and fifty yards below.

I have only once, in all the years I have been shooting, witnessed a similar sight to the one we saw during the next few minutes, and on that occasion the marauder was a leopard.

The *ghooral* had hardly come to rest when a big Himalayan bear came lumbering out of a ravine on the side of the grassy slope and, with never a pause or backward look, came at a fast trot along the cattle track. On reaching the dead goat he sat down and took it into his lap, and as he started nosing the goat, I fired. Maybe I hurried over my shot, or allowed too much for refraction; anyway the bullet went low and struck the bear in the stomach instead of in the chest. To the six of us who were intently watching, it appeared that the bear took the smack of the bullet as an assault from the *ghooral*, for, rearing up, he flung the animal from him and came galloping along the track, emitting angry grunts. As he passed a hundred yards below us I fired my fifth and last cartridge, the bullet, as I found later, going through the fleshy part of his hind quarters.

While the men retrieved the two *ghooral*, I descended to examine the blood trail. The blood on the track showed the bear to be hard hit, but even so there was danger in following it up with an empty rifle, for bears are bad-tempered at the best of times, and are very ugly customers to deal with when wounded.

When the men rejoined me a short council of war was held. Camp was three and a half miles away, and as it was now 2 p.m. it would not be possible to fetch more ammunition, track down and kill the bear, and get back home by dark; so it was unanimously decided that we should follow up the wounded animal and try to finish it off with stones and the axe.

The hill was steep and fairly free of undergrowth, and by keeping above the bear there was a sporting chance of our being able to accomplish our task without serious mishap. We accordingly set off, I leading the way, followed by three men, the rear being brought up by two men each with a *ghooral* strapped to his back. Arrived at the spot where I had fired my last shot, additional blood on the track greatly encouraged us. Two hundred yards further on, the blood trail led down into a deep ravine. Here we



divided up our force, two men crossing to the far side, the owner of the axe and I remaining on the near side, with the men carrying the *ghooral* following in our rear. On the word being given we started to advance down the hill. In the bed of the ravine, and fifty feet below us, was a dense patch of stunted bamboo, and when a stone was thrown into this thicket, the bear got up with a scream of rage; and six men, putting their best foot foremost, went straight up the hill. I was not trained to this form of exercise, and on looking back to see if the bear was gaining on us, I saw, much to my relief, that he was going as hard downhill as we were going uphill. A shout to my companions, a rapid change of direction, and we were off in full cry and rapidly gaining on our quarry. A few well-aimed shots had been registered, followed by delighted shouts from the marksmen, and angry grunts from the bear, when at a sharp bend in the ravine, which necessitated a cautious advance, we lost touch with the bear. To have followed the blood trail would have been easy, but here the ravine was full of big rocks, behind any of which the bear might have been lurking, so while the encumbered men sat down for a rest, a cast was made on either side of the ravine. While my companion went forward to look down into the ravine, I went to the right to prospect a rocky cliff that went sheer down for some two hundred feet. Holding to a tree for support, I leaned over and saw the bear lying on a narrow ledge forty feet immediately below me. I picked up a stone, about thirty pounds in weight, and, again advancing to the edge and in imminent danger of going over myself, I raised the stone above my head with both hands and hurled it.

The stone struck the ledge a few inches from the bear's head, and scrambling to his feet he disappeared from sight, to reappear a minute later on the side of the hill. Once again the hunt was on. The ground was here more open and less encumbered with rocks, and the four of us who were running light had no difficulty in keeping up with him. For a mile or more we ran him at top speed, until we eventually cleared the forest and emerged on to the terraced fields. Rainwater had cut several deep and narrow channels across the fields, and in one of these channels the bear took cover.

The man with the distorted face was the only armed member of the party and he was unanimously elected executioner. Nothing loth, he cautiously

approached the bear and, swinging his beautifully polished axe aloft, brought the square head down on the bear's skull. The result was as alarming as it was unexpected. The axe-head rebounded off the bear's skull as though it had been struck on a block of rubber, and with a scream of rage the animal reared up on his hind legs. Fortunately he did not follow up his advantage, for we were bunched together, and in trying to run got in each other's way.

The bear did not appear to like this open ground, and after going a short way down the channel again took cover. It was now my turn for the axe. The bear, however, having once been struck resented my approach, and it was only after a great deal of manoeuvring that I eventually got within striking distance. It had been my ambition when a boy to be a lumberman in Canada, and I had attained sufficient proficiency with an axe to split a match-stick. I had no fear, therefore, as the owner had, of the axe glancing off and getting damaged on the stones, and the moment I got within reach I buried the entire blade in the bear's skull.

Himalayan bearskins are very greatly prized by our hill folk, and the owner of the axe was a very proud and envied man when I told him he could have the skin in addition to a double share of the *ghooral* meat. Leaving the men, whose numbers were being rapidly augmented by new arrivals from the village, to skin and divide up the bag, I climbed up to the village and paid, as already related, a last visit to the injured girl. The day had been a strenuous one, and if the man-eater had paid me a visit that night she would have 'caught me napping'.

On the road I had taken when coming to Dalkania there were several long stiff climbs up treeless hills, and when I mentioned the discomforts of this road to the villagers they had suggested that I should go back via Haira Khan. This route would necessitate only one climb to the ridge above the village, from where it was downhill all the way to Ranibagh, whence I could complete the journey to Naini Tal by car.

I had warned my men overnight to prepare for an early start, and a little before sunrise, leaving them to pack up and follow me, I said good-bye to

my friends at Dalkania and started on the two-mile climb to the forest road on the ridge above. The footpath I took was not the one by which my men, and later I, had arrived at Dalkania, but was one the villagers used when going to, and returning from, the bazaars in the foot-hills.

The path wound in and out of deep ravines, through thick oak and pine forests and dense undergrowth. There had been no news of the tigress for a week. This absence of news made me all the more careful, and an hour after leaving camp I arrived without mishap at an open glade near the top of the hill, within a hundred yards of the forest road.

The glade was pear-shaped, roughly a hundred yards long and fifty yards wide, with a stagnant pool of rain-water in the centre of it. Sambur and other game used this pool as a drinking place and wallow and, curious to see the tracks round it, I left the path, which skirted the left-hand side of the glade and passed close under a cliff of rock which extended up to the road. As 'I approached the pool I saw the pug marks of the tigress in the soft earth at the edge of the water. She had approached the pool from the same direction as I had, and, evidently disturbed by me, had crossed the water and gone into the dense tree and scrub jungle on the right-hand side of the glade. A great chance lost, for had I kept as careful a lookout in front as I had behind I should have seen her before she saw me. However, though I had missed a chance, the advantages were now all on my side and distinctly in my favour.

The tigress had seen me, or she would not have crossed the pool and hurried for shelter, as her tracks showed she had done. Having seen me she had also seen that I was alone, and watching me from cover as she undoubtedly was, she would assume I was going to the pool to drink as she had done. My movements up to this had been quite natural, and if I could continue to make her think I was unaware of her presence, she would possibly give me a second chance. Stooping down and keeping a very sharp lookout from under my hat, I coughed several times, splashed the water about, and then, moving very slowly and gathering dry sticks on the way, I went to the foot of the steep rock. Here I built a small fire, and putting my back to the rock lit a cigarette. By the time the cigarette had been smoked

the fire had burnt out. I then lay down, and pillowing my head on my left arm placed the rifle on the ground with my finger on the trigger.

The rock above me was too steep for any animal to find foothold on. I had therefore only my front to guard, and as the heavy cover nowhere approached to within less than twenty yards of my position I was quite safe. I had all this time neither seen nor heard anything; nevertheless, I was convinced that the tigress was watching me. The rim of my hat, while effectually shading my eyes, did not obstruct my vision and inch by inch I scanned every bit of the jungle within my range of view. There was not a breath of wind blowing, and not a leaf or blade of grass stirred. My men, whom I had instructed to keep close together and sing from the time they left camp until they joined me on the forest road, were not due for an hour and a half, and during this time it was more than likely that the tigress would break cover and try to stalk, or rush, me.

There are occasions when time drags, and others when it flies. My left arm, on which my head was pillowed, had long since ceased to prick and had gone dead, but even so the singing of the men in the valley below reached me all too soon. The voices grew louder, and presently I caught sight of the men as they rounded a sharp bend. It was possibly at this bend that the tigress had seen me as she turned round to retrace her steps after having her drink. Another failure, and the last chance on this trip gone.

After my men had rested we climbed up to the road, and set off on what proved to be a very long twenty-mile march to the forest Rest House at Haira Khan. After going a couple of hundred yards over open ground, the road entered very thick forest, and here I made the men walk in front while I brought up the rear. We had gone about two miles in this order, when on turning a corner I saw a man sitting on the road, herding buffaloes. It was now time to call a halt for breakfast, so I asked the man where we could get water. He pointed down the hill straight in front of him, and said there was a spring down there from which his village, which was just round the shoulder of the hill, drew its water-supply. There was, however, no necessity for us to go down the hill for water, for if we continued a little further we should find a good spring on the road.

His village was at the upper end of the valley in which the woman of Lohali had been killed the previous week, and he told me that nothing had been heard of the man-eater since, and added that the animal was possibly now at the other end of the district. I disabused his mind on this point by telling him about the fresh pug marks I had seen at the pool, and advised him very strongly to collect his buffaloes and return to the village. His buffaloes, some ten in number, were straggling up towards the road and he said he would leave as soon as they had grazed up to where he was sitting. Handing him a cigarette, I left him with a final warning. What occurred after I left was related to me by the men of the village, when I paid the district a second visit some months later.

When the man eventually got home that day he told the assembled villagers of our meeting, and my warning, and said that after he had watched me go round a bend in the road a hundred yards away he started to light the cigarette I had given him. A wind was blowing, and to protect the flame of the match he bent forward, and while in this position he was seized from behind by the right shoulder and pulled backwards. His first thought was of the party who had just left him, but unfortunately, his cry for help was not heard by them. Help, however, was near at hand, for as soon as the buffaloes heard his cry, mingled with the growl of the tigress, they charged on to the road and drove the tigress off. His shoulder and arm were broken, and with great difficulty he managed to climb on the back of one of his brave rescuers, and, followed by the rest of the herd, reached his home. The villagers tied up his wounds as best they could and carried him thirty miles, non-stop, to the Haldwani hospital, where he died shortly after admission.

When Atropos who snips the threads of life misses one thread she cuts another, and we who do not know why one thread is missed and another cut, call it Fate, Kismet, or what we will.

For a month I had lived in an open tent, a hundred yards from the nearest human being, and from dawn to dusk had wandered through the jungles, and on several occasions had disguised myself as a woman and cut grass in places where no local inhabitant dared to go. During this period the man-eater had, quite possibly, missed many opportunities of adding me to her

bag and now, when making a final effort, she had quite by chance encountered this unfortunate man and claimed him as a victim.

## II

The following February I returned to Dalkania. A number of human beings had been killed, and many more wounded, over a wide area since my departure from the district the previous summer, and as the whereabouts of the tigress was not known and the chances in one place were as good as in another, I decided to return and camp on the ground with which I was now familiar.

On my arrival at Dalkania I was told that a cow had been killed the previous evening, on the hill on which the bear hunt had taken place. The men who had been herding the cattle at the time were positive that the animal they had seen killing the cow was a tiger. The kill was lying near some bushes at the edge of a deserted field, and was clearly visible from the spot where my tent was being put up. Vultures were circling over the kill, and looking through my field-glasses I saw several of these birds perched on a tree, to the left of the kill. From the fact that the kill was lying out in the open, and the vultures had not descended on it, I concluded (a) that the cow had been killed by a leopard, and (b) that the leopard was lying up close to the kill.

The ground below the field on which the cow was lying was very steep and overgrown with dense brushwood. The man-eater was still at large, and an approach over this ground was therefore inadvisable.

To the right was a grassy slope, but the ground here was too open to admit of my approaching the kill without being seen. A deep heavily-wooded ravine, starting from near the crest of the hill, ran right down to the Nandhour river, passing within a short distance of the kill. The tree on which the vultures were perched was growing on the edge of this ravine. I decided on this ravine as my line of approach. While I had been planning out the stalk with the assistance of the villagers, who knew every foot of the ground, my men had prepared tea for me. The day was now on the decline

but by going hard I should just have time to visit the kill and return to camp before nightfall.

Before setting off I instructed my men to be on the look-out. If, after hearing a shot, they saw me on the open ground near the kill, three or four of them were immediately to leave camp, and, keeping to the open ground, to join me. On the other hand if I did not fire, and failed to return by morning, a search party was to be organized.

The ravine was overgrown with raspberry bushes and strewn with great rocks, and as the wind was blowing downhill, my progress was slow. After a stiff climb I eventually reached the tree on which the vultures were perched, only to find that the kill was not visible from this spot. The deserted field, which through my field-glasses had appeared to be quite straight, I found to be crescent-shaped, ten yards across at its widest part and tapering to a point at both ends. The outer edge was bordered with dense undergrowth, and the hill fell steeply away from the inner edge. Only two-thirds of the field was visible from where I was standing, and in order to see the remaining one-third, on which the kill was lying, it would be necessary either to make a wide detour and approach from the far side or climb the tree on which the vultures were perched.

I decided on the latter course. The cow, as far as I could judge, was about twenty yards from the tree, and it was quite possible that the animal that had killed her was even less than that distance from me. To climb the tree without disturbing the killer would have been an impossible feat, and would not have been attempted had it not been for the vultures. There were by now some twenty of these birds on the tree and their number was being added to by new arrivals, and as the accommodation on the upper branches was limited there was much flapping of wings and quarrelling. The tree was leaning outwards away from the hill, and about ten feet from the ground a great limb projected out over the steep hillside. Hampered with the rifle I had great difficulty in reaching this limb. Waiting until a fresh quarrel had broken out among the vultures, I stepped out along the branch—a difficult balancing feat where a slip or false step would have resulted in a fall of a hundred or more feet on to the rocks below—reached a fork, and sat down.

The kill, from which only a few pounds of flesh had been eaten, was now in full view. I had been in position about ten minutes, and was finding my perch none too comfortable, when two vultures, who had been circling round and were uncertain of their reception on the tree, alighted on the field a short distance from the cow. They had hardly come to rest when they were on the wing again, and at the same moment the bushes on my side of the kill were gently agitated and out into the open stepped a fine male leopard.

Those who have never seen a leopard under favourable conditions in his natural surroundings can have no conception of the grace of movement, and beauty of colouring, of this the most graceful and the most beautiful of all animals in our Indian jungles, Nor are his attractions limited to outward appearances, for, pound for pound, his strength is second to none, and in courage he lacks nothing. To class such an animal as VERMIN, as is done in some parts of India, is a crime which only those could perpetrate whose knowledge of the leopard is limited to the miserable, underfed, and mangy specimens seen in captivity.

But beautiful as the specimen was that stood before me, his life was forfeit, for he had taken to cattle killing, and I had promised the people of Dalkania and other villages on my last visit that I would rid them of this their minor enemy, if opportunity offered. The opportunity had now come, and I do not think the leopard heard the shot that killed him.

Of the many incomprehensible things one meets with in life, the hardest to assign any reason for is the way in which misfortune dogs an individual, or a family. Take as an example the case of the owner of the cow over which I had shot the leopard. He was a boy, eight years of age, and an only child. Two years previously his mother, while out cutting grass for the cow, had been killed and eaten by the man-eater, and twelve months later his father had suffered a like fate. The few pots and pans the family possessed had been sold to pay off the small debt left by the father, and the son started life as the owner of one cow; and this particular cow the leopard had selected, out of a herd of two or three hundred head of village cattle, and killed. (I am afraid my attempt to repair a heartbreak was not very successful in this case, for though the new cow, a red one, was an animal of



parts, it did not make up to the boy for the loss of his lifelong white companion.)

My young buffaloes had been well cared for by the man in whose charge I had left them, and the day after my arrival I started tying them out, though I had little hope of the tigress accepting them as bait.

Five miles down the Nandhour valley nestles a little village at the foot of a great cliff of rock, some thousand or more feet high. The man-eater had, during the past few months, killed four people on the outskirts of this village. Shortly after I shot the leopard, a deputation came from this village to request me to move my camp from Dalkania to a site that had been selected for me near their village. I was told that the tiger had frequently been seen on the cliff above the village and that it appeared to have its home in one of the many caves in the cliff face. That very morning, I was informed, some women out cutting grass had seen the tiger, and the villagers were now in a state of terror, and too frightened to leave their homes. Promising the deputation I would do all I could to help them, I made a very early start next morning, climbed the hill opposite the village, and scanned the cliff for an hour or more through my field-glasses. I then crossed the valley, and by way of a very deep ravine climbed the cliff above the village. Here the going was very difficult and not at all to my liking, for added to the danger of a fall, which would have resulted in a broken neck, was the danger of an attack on ground on which it would be impossible to defend oneself.

By 2 p.m. I had seen as much of the rock cliff as I shall ever want to see again, and was making my way up the valley towards my camp and breakfast, when on looking back before starting the stiff climb to Dalkania I saw two men running towards me from the direction in which I had just come. On joining me the men informed me that a tiger had just killed a bullock in the deep ravine up which I had gone earlier in the day. Telling one of the men to go on up to my camp and instruct my servant to send tea and some food, I turned round and, accompanied by the other man, retraced my steps down the valley.

The ravine where the bullock had been killed was about two hundred feet deep and one hundred feet wide. As we approached it I saw a number of vultures rising, and when we arrived at the kill I found the vultures had cleaned it out, leaving only the skin and bones. The spot where the remains of the bullock were lying was only a hundred yards from the village but there was no way up the steep bank, so my guide took me a quarter of a mile down the ravine, to where a cattle track crossed it. This track, after gaining the high ground, wound in and out through dense scrub jungle before it finally fetched up at the village. On arrival at the village I told the Headman that the vultures had ruined the kill, and asked him to provide me with a young buffalo and a short length of stout rope; while these were being procured, two of my men arrived from Dalkania with the food I had sent for.

The sun was near setting when I re-entered the ravine, followed by several men leading a vigorous young male buffalo which the Headman had purchased for me from an adjoining village. Fifty yards from where the bullock had been killed, one end of a pine tree washed down from the hill above had been buried deep in the bed of the ravine. After tying the buffalo very securely to the exposed end of the pine, the men returned to the village. There were no trees in the vicinity, and the only possible place for a sit-up was a narrow ledge on the village side of the ravine. With great difficulty I climbed to this ledge, which was about two feet wide by five feet long, and twenty feet above the bed of the ravine. From a little below the ledge the rock shelved inwards, forming a deep recess that was not visible from the ledge. The ledge canted downwards at an uncomfortable angle, and when I had taken my seat on it, I had my back towards the direction from which I expected the tiger to come, while the tethered buffalo was to my left front, and distant about thirty yards from me.

The sun had set when the buffalo, who had been lying down, scrambled to his feet and faced up the ravine, and a moment later a stone came rolling down. It would not have been possible for me to have fired in the direction from which the sound had come, so to avoid detection I sat perfectly still. After some time the buffalo gradually turned to the left until he was facing in my direction. This showed that whatever he was frightened of— and I

could see he was frightened— was in the recess below me. Presently the head of a tiger appeared directly under me. A head-shot at a tiger is only justified in an emergency, and any movement on my part might have betrayed my presence. For a long minute or two the head remained perfectly still, and then, with a quick dash forward, and one great bound, the tiger was on the buffalo. The buffalo, as I have stated, was facing the tiger, and to avoid a frontal attack with the possibility of injury from the buffalo's horns, the tiger's dash carried him to the left of the buffalo, and he made his attack at right angles. There was no fumbling for tooth-hold, no struggle, and no sound beyond the impact of the two heavy bodies, after which the buffalo lay quite still with the tiger lying partly over it and holding it by the throat. It is generally believed that tigers kill by delivering a smashing blow on the neck. This is incorrect. Tigers kill with their teeth.

The right side of the tiger was towards me and, taking careful aim with the .275 I had armed myself with when leaving camp that morning, I fired. Relinquishing its hold on the buffalo, the tiger, without making a sound, turned and bounded off up the ravine and out of sight. Clearly a miss, for which I was unable to assign any reason. If the tiger had not seen me or the flash of the rifle there was a possibility that it would return; so recharging the rifle I sat on.

The buffalo, after the tiger left him, lay without movement, and the conviction grew on me that I had shot him instead of the tiger. Ten, fifteen minutes had dragged by, when the tiger's head for a second time appeared from the recess below me. Again there was a long pause, and then, very slowly, the tiger emerged, walked up to the buffalo and stood looking down at it. With the whole length of the back as a target I was going to make no mistake the second time. Very carefully the sights were aligned, and the trigger slowly pressed; but instead of the tiger falling dead as I expected it to, it sprang to the left and went tearing up a little ravine, dislodging stones as it went up the steep hillside.

Two shots fired in comparatively good light at a range of thirty yards, and heard by anxious villagers for miles round: and all I should have to show for them would be, certainly one, and quite possibly two, bullet holes in a

dead buffalo. Clearly my eyesight was failing, or in climbing the rock I had knocked the foresight out of alignment. But on focussing my eyes on small objects I found there was nothing wrong with my eyesight, and a glance along the barrel showed that the sights were all right, so the only reason I could assign for having missed the tiger twice was bad shooting.

There was no chance of the tiger returning a third time; and even if it did return, there was nothing to be gained by risking the possibility of only wounding it in bad light when I had not been able to kill it while the light had been comparatively good. Under these circumstances there was no object in my remaining any longer on the ledge.

My clothes were still damp from my exertions earlier in the day, a cold wind was blowing and promised to get colder, my shorts were of thin khaki and the rock was hard and cold, and a hot cup of tea awaited me in the village. Good as these reasons were, there was a better and a more convincing reason for my remaining where I was— the man-eater. It was now quite dark. A quarter-of-a-mile walk, along a boulder-strewn ravine and a winding path through dense undergrowth, lay between me and the village. Beyond the suspicions of the villagers that the tiger they had seen the previous day— and that I had quite evidently just fired at— was the man-eater, I had no definite knowledge of the man-eater's whereabouts; and though at that moment she might have been fifty miles away, she might also have been watching me from a distance of fifty yards, so, uncomfortable as my perch was, prudence dictated that I should remain where I was. As the long hours dragged by, the conviction grew on me that man-eater shooting, by night, was not a pastime that appealed to me, and that if this animal could not be shot during daylight hours she would have to be left to die of old age. This conviction was strengthened, when, cold and stiff, I started to climb down as soon as there was sufficient light to shoot by, and slipping on the dew-drenched rock completed the descent with my feet in the air. Fortunately I landed on a bed of sand, without doing myself or the rifle any injury.

Early as it was I found the village astir, and I was quickly in the middle of a small crowd. In reply to the eager questions from all sides, I was only

able to say that I had been firing at an imaginary tiger with blank ammunition.

A pot of tea drunk while sitting near a roaring fire did much to restore warmth to my inner and outer man, and then, accompanied by most of the men and all the boys of the village, I went to where a rock jutted out over the ravine and directly above my overnight exploit. To the assembled throng I explained how the tiger had appeared from the recess under me and had bounded on to the buffalo, and how after I had fired it had dashed off in that direction; and as I pointed up the ravine there was an excited shout of 'Look, sahib, there's the tiger lying dead!' My eyes were strained with an all-night vigil, but even after looking away and back again there was no denying the fact that the tiger was lying there, dead. To the very natural question of why I had fired a second shot after a period of twenty or thirty minutes, I said that the tiger had appeared a second time from exactly the same place, and that I had fired at it while it was standing near the buffalo and that it had gone up that side ravine— and there were renewed shouts, in which the women and girls who had now come up joined, of 'Look, sahib, there is another tiger lying dead!' Both tigers appeared to be about the same size and both were lying sixty yards from where I had fired.

Questioned on the subject of this second tiger, the villagers said that when the four human beings had been killed, and also on the previous day when the bullock had been killed, only one tiger had been seen. The mating season for tigers is an elastic one extending from November to April, and the man-eater— if either of the two tigers lying within view was the man-eater— had evidently provided herself with a mate.

A way into the ravine, down the steep rock face, was found some two hundred yards below where I had sat up, and, followed by the entire population of the village, I went past the dead buffalo to where the first tiger was lying. As I approached it hopes rose high, for she was an old tigress. Handing the rifle to the nearest man I got down on my knees to examine her feet. On that day when the tigress had tried to stalk the women cutting wheat she had left some beautiful pug marks on the edge of the field. They were the first pug marks I had seen of the man-eater, and I had

examined them very carefully. They showed the tigress to be a very old animal, whose feet had splayed out with age. The pads of the forefeet were heavily rutted, one deep rut running right across the pad of the right forefoot, and the toes were elongated to a length I had never before seen in a tiger. With these distinctive feet it would have been easy to pick the man-eater out of a hundred dead tigers. The animal before me was, I found to my great regret, not the man-eater. When I conveyed this information to the assembled throng of people there was a murmur of strong dissent from all sides. It was asserted that I myself, on my previous visit, had declared the man-eater to be an old tigress, and such an animal I had now shot a few yards from where, only a short time previously, four of their number had been killed. Against this convincing evidence, of what value was the evidence of the feet, for the feet of all tigers were alike!

The second tiger could, under the circumstances, only be a male, and while I made preparations to skin the tigress I sent a party of men to fetch him. The side ravine was steep and narrow, and after a great deal of shouting and laughter the second tiger — a fine male— was laid down alongside the tigress.

The skinning of those two tigers that had been dead fourteen hours, with the sun beating down on my back and an evergrowing crowd pressing round, was one of the most unpleasant tasks I have ever undertaken. By early afternoon the job was completed, and with the skins neatly tied up for my men to carry I was ready to start on my five-mile walk back to camp.

During the morning Headmen and others had come in from adjoining villages, and before leaving I assured them that the Chowgarh man-eater was not dead and warned them that the slackening of precautions would give the tigress the opportunity she was waiting for. Had my warning been heeded, the man-eater would not have claimed as many victims as she did during the succeeding months.

There was no further news of the man-eater, and after a stay of a few weeks at Dalkania, I left to keep an appointment with the district officials in the terai.

### III

In March 1930, Vivian, our District Commissioner, was touring through the man-eater's domain, and on the 22nd of the month I received an urgent request from him to go to Kala Agar, where he said he would await my arrival. It is roughly fifty miles from Naini Tal to Kala Agar, and two days after receipt of Vivian's letter I arrived in time for breakfast at the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow, where he and Mrs Vivian were staying.

Over breakfast the Vivians told me they had arrived at the bungalow on the afternoon of the 21st, and while they were having tea on the verandah, one of six women who were cutting grass in the compound of the bungalow had been killed and carried off by the man-eater. Rifles were hurriedly seized and, accompanied by some of his staff, Vivian followed up the 'drag' and found the dead woman tucked away under a bush at the foot of an oak tree. On examining the ground later, I found that on the approach of Vivian's party the tigress had gone off down the hill, and throughout the subsequent proceedings had remained in a thicket of raspberry bushes, fifty yards from the kill. A *machan* was put up in the oak tree for Vivian, and two others in trees near the forest road which passed thirty yards above the kill, for members of his staff. The machans were occupied as soon as they were ready and the party sat up the whole night, without, however, seeing anything of the tigress.

Next morning the body of the woman was removed for cremation, and a young buffalo was tied up on the forest road about half a mile from the bungalow, and killed by the tigress the same night. The following evening the Vivians sat up over the buffalo. There was no moon, and just as daylight was fading out and nearby objects becoming indistinct, they first heard, and then saw an animal coming up to the kill, which in the uncertain light they mistook for a bear; but for this unfortunate mistake their very sporting effort would have resulted in their bagging the man-eater, for both the Vivians are good rifle shots.

On the 25th the Vivians left Kala Agar, and during the course of the day my four buffaloes arrived from Dalkania. As the tigress now appeared to be inclined to accept this form of bait I tied them up at intervals of a few hundred yards along the forest road. For three nights in succession the tigress passed within a few feet of the buffaloes without touching them, but on the fourth night the buffalo nearest the bungalow was killed. On examining the kill in the morning I was disappointed to find that the buffalo had been killed by a pair of leopards I had heard calling the previous night above the bungalow. I did not like the idea of firing in this locality, for fear of driving away the tigress, but it was quite evident that if I did not shoot the leopards they would kill my three remaining buffaloes, so I stalked them while they were sunning themselves on some big rocks above the kill, and shot both of them.

The forest road from the Kala Agar bungalow runs for several miles due west through very beautiful forests of pine, oak and rhododendron, and in these forests there is, compared with the rest of Kumaon, quite a lot of game in the way of sambur, *kakar* and pig, in addition to a great wealth of bird life. On two occasions I suspected the tigress of having killed sambur in this forest, and though on both occasions I found the bloodstained spot where the animal had been killed, I failed to find either of the kills.

For the next fourteen days I spent all the daylight hours either on the forest road, on which no one but myself ever set foot, or in the jungle, and only twice during that period did I get near the tigress. On the first occasion I had been down to visit an isolated village, on the south face of Kala Agar ridge, that had been abandoned the previous year owing to the depredations of the man-eater, and on the way back had taken a cattle track that went over the ridge and down the far side to the forest road, when, approaching a pile of rocks, I suddenly felt there was danger ahead. The distance from the ridge to the forest road was roughly three hundred yards. The track, after leaving the ridge, went steeply down for a few yards and then turned to the right and ran diagonally across the hill for a hundred yards; the pile of rocks was about midway on the right-hand side of this length of the track. Beyond the rocks a hairpin bend carried the track to the left, and a hundred



yards further on, another sharp bend took it down to its junction with the forest road.

I had been along this track many times, and this was the first occasion on which I hesitated to pass the rocks. To avoid them I should either have had to go several hundred yards through dense undergrowth, or make a wide detour round and above them; the former would have subjected me to very great danger, and there was no time for the latter, for the sun was near setting and I had still two miles to go. So, whether I liked it or not, there was nothing for it but to face the rocks. The wind was blowing up the hill so I was able to ignore the thick cover on the left of the track, and concentrate all my attention on the rocks to my right. A hundred feet would see me clear of the danger zone, and this distance I covered foot by foot, walking sideways with my face to the rocks and the rifle to my shoulder; a strange mode of progression, had there been any to see it.

Thirty yards beyond the rocks was an open glade, starting from the right-hand side of the track and extending up the hill for fifty or sixty yards, and screened from the rocks by a fringe of bushes. In this glade a *kakar* was grazing. I saw her before she saw me, and watched her out of the corner of my eye. On catching sight of me she threw up her head, and as I was not looking in her direction and was moving slowly on she stood stock still, as these animals have a habit of doing when they are under the impression that they have not been seen. On arrival at the hairpin bend I looked over my shoulder and saw that the *kakar* had lowered her head, and was once more cropping the grass.

I had walked a short distance along the track after passing the bend when the *kakar* went dashing up the hill, barking hysterically. In a few quick strides I was back at the bend, and was just in time to see a movement in the bushes on the lower side of the track. That the *kakar* had seen the tigress was quite evident, and the only place where she could have seen her was on the track. The movement I had seen might have been caused by the passage of a bird, on the other hand it might have been caused by the tigress; anyway, a little investigation was necessary before proceeding further on my way.

A trickle of water seeping out from under the rocks had damped the red clay of which the track was composed, making an ideal surface for the impression of tracks. In this damp clay I had left footprints, and over these footprints I now found the splayed-out pug marks of the tigress where she had jumped down from the rocks and followed me, until the *kakar* had seen her and given its alarm-call, whereon the tigress had left the track and entered the bushes where I had seen the movement. The tigress was undoubtedly familiar with every foot of the ground, and not having had an opportunity of killing me at the rocks— and her chance of bagging me at the first hairpin bend having been spoilt by the *kakar*— she was probably now making her way through the dense undergrowth to try to intercept me at the second bend.

Further progress along the track was now not advisable, so I followed the *kakar* up the glade, and turning to the left worked my way down, over open ground, to the forest road below. Had there been sufficient daylight I believe I could, that evening, have turned the tables on the tigress, for the conditions, after she left the shelter of the rocks, were all in my favour. I knew the ground as well as she did, and while she had no reason to suspect my intention towards her, I had the advantage of knowing, very clearly, her intentions towards me. However, though the conditions were in my favour, I was unable to take advantage of them owing to the lateness of the evening.

I have made mention elsewhere of the sense that warns us of impending danger, and will not labour the subject further beyond stating that this sense is a very real one and that I do not know, and therefore cannot explain, what brings it into operation. On this occasion I had neither heard nor seen the tigress, nor had I received any indication from bird or beast of her presence, and yet I knew, without any shadow of doubt, that she was lying up for me among the rocks. I had been out for many hours that day and had covered many miles of jungle with unflagging caution, but without one moment's unease, and then, on cresting the ridge, and coming in sight of the rocks, I knew they held danger for me, and this knowledge was confirmed a few minutes later by the *kakar*'s warning call to the jungle folk, and by my finding the man-eater's pug marks superimposed on my footprints.

## IV

To those of my readers who have had the patience to accompany me so far in my narrative, I should like to give a clear and a detailed account of my first— and last— meeting with the tigress.

The meeting took place in the early afternoon of the 11th of April 1930, nineteen days after my arrival at Kala Agar.

I had gone out that day at 2 p.m. with the intention of tying up my three buffaloes at selected places along the forest road, when at a point a mile from the bungalow, where the road crosses a ridge and goes from the north to the west face of the Kala Agar range, I came on a large party of men who had been out collecting firewood. In the party was an old man who, pointing down the hill to a thicket of young oak trees some five hundred yards from where we were standing, said it was in that thicket where the man-eater, a month previously, had killed his only son, a lad eighteen years of age. I had not heard the father's version of the killing of his son, so, while we sat on the edge of the road smoking, he told his story, pointing out the spot where the lad had been killed, and where all that was left of him had been found the following day. The old man blamed the twenty-five men who had been out collecting firewood on that day for the death of his son, saying, very bitterly, that they had run away and left him to be killed by the tiger. Some of the men sitting near me had been in that party of twenty-five and they hotly repudiated responsibility for the lad's death, accusing him of having been responsible for the stampede by screaming out that he had heard the tiger growling and telling everyone to run for their lives. This did not satisfy the old man. He shook his head and said, 'You are grown men and he was only a boy, and you ran away and left him to be killed.' I was sorry for having asked the questions that had led to this heated discussion, and more to placate the old man than for any good it would do, I said I would tie up one of my buffaloes near the spot where he said his son had been killed. So, handing two of the buffaloes over to the party to take back to the bungalow, I set off followed by two of my men leading the remaining buffalo.

A footpath, taking off close to where we had been sitting, went down the hill to the valley below and zigzagged up the opposite pine-clad slope to join the forest road two miles further on. The path passed close to an open patch of ground which bordered the oak thicket in which the lad had been killed. On this patch of ground, which was about thirty yards square, there was a solitary pine sapling. This I cut down. I tied the buffalo to the stump, set one man to cutting a supply of grass for it, and sent the other man, Madho Singh, who served in the Garhwalis during the Great War and is now serving in the United Provinces Civil Pioneer Force, up an oak tree with instructions to strike a dry branch with the head of his axe and call at the top of his voice as hill people do when cutting leaves for their cattle. I then took up a position on a rock, about four feet high, on the lower edge of the open ground. Beyond the rock the hill fell steeply away to the valley below and was densely clothed with tree and scrub jungle.

The man on the ground had made several trips with the grass he had cut, and Madho Singh on the tree was alternately shouting and singing lustily, while I stood on the rock smoking, with the rifle in the hollow of my left arm, when, all at once, I became aware that the man-eater had arrived. Beckoning urgently to the man on the ground to come to me, I whistled to attract Madho Singh's attention and signalled to him to remain quiet. The ground on three sides was comparatively open. Madho Singh on the tree was to my left front, the man cutting grass had been in front of me, while the buffalo— now showing signs of uneasiness— was to my right front. In this area the tigress could not have approached without my seeing her; and as she had approached, there was only one place where she could now be, and that was behind and immediately below me.

When taking up my position I had noticed that the further side of the rock was steep and smooth, that it extended down the hill for eight or ten feet, and that the lower portion of it was masked by thick undergrowth and young pine saplings. It would have been a little difficult, but quite possible, for the tigress to have climbed the rock, and I relied for my safety on hearing her in the undergrowth should she make the attempt.

I have no doubt that the tigress, attracted, as I had intended she should be, by the noise Madho Singh was making, had come to the rock, and that it was while she was looking up at me and planning her next move that I had become aware of her presence. My change of front, coupled with the silence of the men, may have made her suspicious; anyway, after a lapse of a few minutes, I heard a dry twig snap a little way down the hill; thereafter the feeling of unease left me, and the tension relaxed. An opportunity lost; but there was still a very good chance of my getting a shot, for she would undoubtedly return before long, and when she found us gone would probably content herself with killing the buffalo. There were still four or five hours of daylight, and by crossing the valley and going up the opposite slope I should be able to overlook the whole of the hillside on which the buffalo was tethered. The shot, if I did get one, would be a long one of from two to three hundred yards, but the .275 rifle I was carrying was accurate, and even if I only wounded the tigress I should have a blood trail to follow, which would be better than feeling about for her in hundreds of square miles of jungle, as I had been doing these many months.

The men were a difficulty. To have sent them back to the bungalow alone would have been nothing short of murder, so of necessity I kept them with me.

Tying the buffalo to the stump in such a manner as to make it impossible for the tigress to carry it away, I left the open ground and rejoined the path to carry out the plan I have outlined, of trying to get a shot from the opposite hill.

About a hundred yards along the path I came to a ravine. On the far side of this the path entered very heavy undergrowth, and as it was inadvisable to go into thick cover with two men following me, I decided to take to the ravine, follow it down to its junction with the valley, work up the valley and pick up the path on the far side of the undergrowth.

The ravine was about ten yards wide and four or five feet deep, and as I stepped down into it a nightjar fluttered off a rock on which I had put my hand. On looking at the spot from which the bird had risen, I saw two eggs.

These eggs, straw-coloured, with rich brown markings, were of a most unusual shape, one being long and very pointed, while the other was as round as a marble; and as my collection lacked nightjar eggs I decided to add this odd clutch to it. I had no receptacle of any kind in which to carry the eggs, so cupping my left hand I placed the eggs in it and packed them round with a little moss.

As I went down the ravine the banks became higher, and sixty yards from where I had entered it I came on a deep drop of some twelve to fourteen feet. The water that rushes down all these hill ravines in the rains had worn the rock as smooth as glass, and as it was too steep to offer a foothold I handed the rifle to the men and, sitting on the edge, proceeded to slide down. My feet had hardly touched the sandy bottom when the two men, with a flying leap, landed one on either side of me, and thrusting the rifle into my hand asked in a very agitated manner if I had heard the tiger. As a matter of fact I had heard nothing, possibly due to the scraping of my clothes on the rocks, and when questioned, the men said that what they had heard was a deep-throated growl from somewhere close at hand, but exactly from which direction the sound had come, they were unable to say. Tigers do not betray their presence by growling when looking for their dinner and the only, and very unsatisfactory, explanation I can offer is that the tigress followed us after we left the open ground, and on seeing that we were going down the ravine had gone ahead and taken up a position where the ravine narrowed to half its width; and that when she was on the point of springing out on me, I had disappeared out of sight down the slide and she had involuntarily given vent to her disappointment with a low growl. Not a satisfactory reason, unless one assumes— without any reason— that she had selected me for her dinner, and therefore had no interest in the two men.

Where the three of us now stood in a bunch we had the smooth steep rock behind us, to our right a wall of rock slightly leaning over the ravine and fifteen feet high, and to our left a tumbled bank of big rocks thirty or forty feet high. The sandy bed of the ravine, on which we were standing, was roughly forty feet long and ten feet wide. At the lower end of this sandy bed a great pine tree had fallen across, damming the ravine, and the collection of the sand was due to this dam. The wall of overhanging rock came to an

end twelve or fifteen feet from the fallen tree, and as I approached the end of the rock, my feet making no sound on the sand, I very fortunately noticed that the sandy bed continued round to the back of the rock.

This rock about which I have said so much I can best describe as a giant school slate, two feet thick at its lower end, and standing up— not quite perpendicularly— on one of its long sides.

As I stepped clear of the giant slate, I looked behind me over my right shoulder and— looked straight into the tigress's face.

I would like you to have a clear picture of the situation.

The sandy bed behind the rock was quite flat. To the right of it was the smooth slate fifteen feet high and leaning slightly outwards, to the left of it was a scoured-out steep bank also some fifteen feet high overhung by a dense tangle of thorn bushes, while at the far end was a slide similar to, but a little higher than, the one I had glissaded down. The sandy bed, enclosed by these three natural walls, was about twenty feet long and half as wide, and lying on it, with her fore-paws stretched out and her hind legs well tucked under her, was the tigress. Her head, which was raised a few inches off her paws, was eight feet (measured later) from me, and on her face was a smile, similar to that one sees on the face of a dog welcoming his master home after a long absence.





Two thoughts flashed through my mind, one, that it was up to me to make the first move, and the other, that the move would have to be made in such a manner as not to alarm the tigress or make her nervous.

The rifle was in my right hand held diagonally across my chest, with the safety-catch off, and in order to get it to bear on the tigress the muzzle would have to be swung round three-quarters of a circle.

The movement of swinging round the rifle, with one hand, was begun very slowly, and hardly perceptibly, and when a quarter of a circle had been made, the stock came in contact with my right side. It was now necessary to extend my arm, and as the stock cleared my side, the swing was very slowly continued. My arm was now at full stretch and the weight of the rifle was beginning to tell. Only a little further now for the muzzle to go, and the tigress—who had not once taken her eyes off mine—was still looking up at me, with the pleased expression still on her face.

How long it took the rifle to make the three-quarter circle, I am not in a position to say. To me, looking into the tigress's eyes and unable therefore to follow the movement of the barrel, it appeared that my arm was paralysed, and that the swing would never be completed. However, the movement was completed at last, and as soon as the rifle was pointing at the tigress's body, I pressed the trigger.

I heard the report, exaggerated in that restricted space, and felt the jar of the recoil, and but for these tangible proofs that the rifle had gone off, I might, for all the immediate result the shot produced, have been in the grip of one of those awful nightmares in which triggers are vainly pulled of rifles that refuse to be discharged at the critical moment.

For a perceptible fraction of time the tigress remained perfectly still, and then, very slowly, her head sank on to her outstretched paws, while at the same time a jet of blood issued from the bullet-hole. The bullet had injured her spine and shattered the upper portion of her heart.

The two men who were following a few yards behind me, and who were separated from the tigress by the thickness of the rock, came to a halt when

they saw me stop and turn my head. They knew instinctively that I had seen the tigress and judged from my behaviour that she was close at hand, and Madho Singh said afterwards that he wanted to call out and tell me to drop the eggs and get both hands on the rifle. When I had fired my shot and lowered the point of the rifle on to my toes, Madho Singh, at a sign, came forward to relieve me of it, for very suddenly my legs appeared to be unable to support me, so I made for the fallen tree and sat down. Even before looking at the pads of her feet I knew it was the Chowgarh tigress I had sent to the Happy Hunting Grounds, and that the shears that had assisted her to cut the threads of sixty-four human lives—the people of the district put the number at twice that figure—had, while the game was in her hands, turned, and cut the thread of her own life.

Three things, each of which would appear to you to have been to my disadvantage, were actually in my favour. These were (a) the eggs in my left hand, (b) the light rifle I was carrying, and (c) the tiger being a man-eater. If I had not had the eggs in my hand I should have had both hands on the rifle, and when I looked back and saw the tiger at such close quarters I should instinctively have tried to swing round to face her, and the spring that was arrested by my lack of movement would inevitably have been launched. Again, if the rifle had not been a light one it would not have been possible for me to have moved it in the way it was imperative I should move it, and then discharge it at the full extent of my arm. And lastly, if the tiger had been just an ordinary tiger, and not a man-eater, it would, on finding itself cornered, have made for the opening and wiped me out of the way; and to be wiped out of the way by a tiger usually has fatal results.

While the men made a detour and went up the hill to free the buffalo and secure the rope, which was needed for another and more pleasant purpose, I climbed over the rocks and went up the ravine to restore the eggs to their rightful owner. I plead guilty of being as superstitious as my brother sportsmen. For three long periods, extending over a whole year, I had tried—and tried hard—to get a shot at the tigress, and had failed; and now within a few minutes of having picked up the eggs my luck had changed.

The eggs, which all this time had remained safely in the hollow of my left hand, were still warm when I replaced them in the little depression in the rock that did duty as a nest, and when I again passed that way half an hour later, they had vanished under the brooding mother whose colouring so exactly matched the mottled rock that it was difficult for me, who knew the exact spot where the nest was situated, to distinguish her from her surroundings.

The buffalo, who after months of care was now so tame that it followed like a dog, came scrambling down the hill in the wake of the men, nosed the tigress and lay down on the sand to chew the cud of contentment, while we lashed the tigress to the stout pole the men had cut.

I had tried to get Madho Singh to return to the bungalow for help, but this he would not hear of doing. With no one would he and his companion share the honour of carrying in the man-eater, and if I would lend a hand the task, he said, with frequent halts for rest, would not be too difficult. We were three hefty men—two accustomed from childhood to carrying heavy loads—and all three hardened by a life of exposure; but even so, the task we set ourselves was a herculean one.

The path down which we had come was too narrow and too winding for the long pole to which the tigress was lashed, so, with frequent halts to regain breath and readjust pads to prevent the pole biting too deep into shoulder muscles, we went straight up the hill through a tangle of raspberry and briar bushes, on the thorns of which we left a portion of our clothing and an amount of skin which made bathing for many days a painful operation.

The sun was still shining on the surrounding hills when three dishevelled and very happy men, followed by a buffalo, carried the tigress to the Kala Agar Forest Bungalow, and from that evening to this day no human being has been killed—or wounded—over the hundreds of square miles of mountain and vale over which the Chowgarh tigress, for a period of five years, held sway.

I have added one more cross and date to the map of Eastern Kumaon that hangs on the wall before me— the cross and the date the man-eater earned. The cross is two miles west of Kala Agar, and the date under it is 11 April 1930.

The tigress's claws were broken, and bushed out, and one of her canine teeth was broken, and her front teeth were worn down to the bone. It was these defects that had made her a man-eater and were the cause of her not being able to kill outright— and by her own efforts— a large proportion of the human beings she had attacked since the day she had been deprived of the assistance of the cub I had, on my first visit, shot by mistake.





## *The Bachelor of Powalgarh*

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### I

**T**HREE miles from our winter home, and in the heart of the forest, there is an open glade some four hundred yards long and half as wide, grassed with emerald-green and surrounded with big trees interlaced with cane creepers. It was in this glade, which for beauty has no equal, that I first saw the tiger who was known throughout the United Provinces as 'The Bachelor of Powalgarh', who from 1920 to 1930 was the most sought-after big-game trophy in the province.

The sun had just risen one winter's morning when I crested the high ground overlooking the glade. On the far side, a score of red jungle fowl were scratching among the dead leaves bordering a crystal-clear stream, and scattered over the emerald-green grass, now sparkling with dew, fifty or more chital were feeding. Sitting on a tree stump and smoking, I had been looking at this scene for some time when the hind nearest to me raised her head, turned in my direction and called; and a moment later the Bachelor

stepped into the open, from the thick bushes below me. For a long minute he stood with head held high surveying the scene, and then with slow unhurried steps started to cross the glade. In his rich winter coat, which the newly risen sun was lighting up, he was a magnificent sight as, with head turning now to the right and now to the left, he walked down the wide lane the deer had made for him. At the stream he lay down and quenched his thirst, then sprang across and, as he entered the dense tree jungle beyond, called three times in acknowledgement of the homage the jungle folk had paid him, for from the time he had entered the glade every chital had called, every jungle fowl had cackled, and every one of a troupe of monkeys on the trees had chattered.

The Bachelor was far afield that morning, for his home was in a ravine six miles away. Living in an area in which the majority of tigers are bagged with the aid of elephants, he had chosen his home wisely. The ravine, running into the foot-hills, was half a mile long, with steep hills on either side rising to a height of a thousand feet. At the upper end of the ravine there was a waterfall some twenty feet high, and at the lower end, where the water had cut through red clay, it narrowed to four feet. Any sportsman, therefore, who wished to try conclusions with the Bachelor, while he was at home, would of a necessity have to do so on foot. It was this secure retreat, and the Government rules prohibiting night shooting, that had enabled the Bachelor to retain possession of his much sought-after skin.

In spite of the many and repeated attempts that had been made to bag him with the aid of buffalo bait, the Bachelor had never been fired at, though on two occasions, to my knowledge, he had only escaped death by the skin of his teeth. On the first occasion, after a perfect beat, a guy rope by which the *machan* was suspended interfered with the movement of Fred Anderson's rifle at the critical moment, and on the second occasion the Bachelor arrived at the *machan* before the beat started and found Huish Edye filling his pipe. On both these occasions he had been viewed at a range of only a few feet, and while Anderson described him as being as big as a Shetland pony, Edye said he was as big as a donkey.

The winter following these and other unsuccessful attempts, I took Wyndham, our Commissioner, who knows more about tigers than any other man in India, to a fire track skirting the upper end of the ravine in which the Bachelor lived, to show him the fresh pug marks of the tiger which I had found on the fire track that morning. Wyndham was accompanied by two of his most experienced shikaris, and after the three of them had carefully measured and examined the pug marks, Wyndham said that in his opinion the tiger was ten feet between pugs, and while one *shikari* said he was 10' 5" over curves, the other said he was 10' 6" or a little more. All three agreed that they had never seen the pug marks of a bigger tiger.

In 1930 the Forest Department started extensive fellings in the area surrounding the Bachelor's home and annoyed at the disturbance he changed his quarters; this I learnt from two sportsmen who had taken out a shooting pass with the object of hunting down the tiger. Shooting passes are only issued for fifteen days of each month, and throughout that winter, shooting party after shooting party failed to make contact with the tiger.

Towards the end of the winter an old *dak* runner, who passes our gate every morning and evening on his seven-mile run through the forest to a hill village, came to me one evening and reported that on his way out that morning he had seen the biggest pug marks of a tiger that he had seen during the thirty years of his service. The tiger, he said, had come from the west and after proceeding along the road for two hundred yards had gone east, taking a path that started from near an almond tree. This tree was about two miles from our home, and was a well-known landmark. The path the tiger had taken runs through very heavy jungle for half a mile before crossing a wide watercourse, and then joins a cattle track which skirts the foot of the hills before entering a deep and well-wooded valley; a favourite haunt of tigers.

Early next morning, with Robin at my heels, I set out to prospect, my objective being the point where the cattle track entered the valley, for at this point the tracks of all the animals entering or leaving the valley are to be found. From the time we started Robin appeared to know that we had a special job in hand and he paid not the least attention to the jungle fowl we

disturbed, the *kakar* (barking deer) that let us get quite close to it, and the two sambur that stood and belled at us. Where the cattle track entered the valley the ground was hard and stony, and when we reached this spot Robin put down his head and very carefully smelt the stones, and on receiving a signal from me to carry on he turned and started down the track, keeping a yard ahead of me; I could tell from his behaviour that he was on the scent of a tiger, and that the scent was hot. A hundred yards further down, where the track flattens out and runs along the foot of the hill, the ground is soft; here I saw the pug marks of a tiger, and a glance at them satisfied me we were on the heels of the Bachelor and that he was only a minute or two ahead of us.

Beyond the soft ground the track runs for three hundred yards over stones, before going steeply down onto an open plain. If the tiger kept to the track we should probably see him on this open ground. We had gone another fifty yards when Robin stopped and, after running his nose up and down a blade of grass on the left of the track, turned and entered the grass which was here about two feet high. On the far side of the grass there was a patch of clerodendron, about forty yards wide. This plant grows in dense patches to a height of five feet, and has widely spread leaves and a big head of flowers not unlike horse-chestnut. It is greatly fancied by tiger, sambur and pig because of the shade it gives. When Robin reached the clerodendron he stopped and backed towards me, thus telling me that he could not see into the bushes ahead and wished to be carried. Lifting him up, I put his hind legs into my left-hand pocket, and when he had hooked his forefeet over my left arm, he was safe and secure, and I had both hands free for the rifle. On these occasions Robin was always in deadly earnest, and no matter what he saw, or how our quarry behaved before or after fired at, he never moved and spoilt my shot, or impeded my view. Proceeding very slowly, we had gone half-way through the clerodendron when I saw the bushes directly in front of us swaying. Waiting until the tiger had cleared the bushes, I went forward expecting to see him in the more or less open jungle, but he was nowhere in sight, and when I put Robin down he turned to the left and indicated that the tiger had gone into a deep and narrow ravine nearby. This ravine ran to the foot of an isolated hill on which there were caves frequented by tigers, and as I was not armed to deal



with a tiger at close quarters, and further, as it was time for breakfast, Robin and I turned and made for home.

After breakfast I returned alone, armed with a heavy .450 rifle, and as I approached the hill, which in the days of the long ago had been used by the local inhabitants as a rallying point against the Gurkha invaders, I heard the boom of a big buffalo bell, and a man shouting. These sounds were coming from the top of the hill, which is flat, and about half an acre in extent, so I climbed up and saw a man on a tree, striking a dead branch with the head of his axe and shouting, while at the foot of the tree a number of buffaloes were collected. When he saw me the man called out, saying I had just arrived in time to save him and his buffaloes from a *shaitan* of a tiger, the size of a camel, that had been threatening them for hours. From his story I gathered that he had arrived on the hill shortly after Robin and I had left for home, and that as he started to cut bamboo leaves for his buffaloes he saw a tiger coming towards him. He shouted to drive the tiger away, as he had done on many previous occasions with other tigers, but instead of going away this one had started to growl. He took to his heels, followed by his buffaloes, and climbed up the nearest tree. The tiger, paying no heed to his shouts, had then set to pacing round and round, while the buffaloes kept their heads towards it. Probably the tiger had heard me coming, for it had left only a moment before I had arrived. The man was an old friend, who before his quarrel with the Headman of his village had done a considerable amount of poaching in these jungles with the Headman's gun. He now begged me to conduct both himself and his cattle safely out of the jungle; so telling him to lead on, I followed behind to see that there were no stragglers. At first the buffaloes were disinclined to break up their close formation, but after a little persuasion we got them to start, and we had gone half-way across the open plain I have alluded to when the tiger called in the jungle to our right. The man quickened his pace, and I urged on the buffaloes, for a mile of very thick jungle lay between us and the wide, open watercourse beyond which lay my friend's village and safety for his buffaloes.

I have earned the reputation of being keener on photographing animals than on killing them, and before I left my friend he begged me to put aside

photography for this once, and kill the tiger, which he said was big enough to eat a buffalo a day, and ruin him in twenty-five days. I promised to do my best and turned to retrace my steps to the open plain, to meet with an experience every detail of which has burnt itself deep into my memory.

On reaching the plain I sat down to wait for the tiger to disclose his whereabouts, or for the jungle folk to tell me where he was. It was then about 3 p.m., and as the sun was warm and comforting, I put my head down on my drawn-up knees and had been dozing a few minutes when I was awakened by the tiger calling; thereafter he continued to call at short intervals.

Between the plain and the hills there is a belt, some half-mile wide, of the densest scrub jungle for a hundred miles round, and I located the tiger as being on the hills on the far side of the scrub— about three-quarters of a mile from me— and from the way he was calling it was evident he was in search of a mate.

Starting from the upper left-hand corner of the plain, and close to where I was sitting, an old cart track, used some years previously for extracting timber, ran in an almost direct line to where the tiger was calling. This track would take me in the direction of the calling animal, but on the hills was high grass, and without Robin to help me there would be little chance of my seeing him. So instead of my going to look for the tiger, I decided he should come and look for me. I was too far away for him to hear me, so I sprinted up the cart track for a few hundred yards, laid down my rifle, climbed to the top of a high tree and called three times. I was immediately answered by the tiger. After climbing down, I ran back, calling as I went, and arrived on the plain without having found a suitable place in which to sit and await the tiger. Something would have to be done and done in a hurry, for the tiger was rapidly coming nearer, so, after rejecting a little hollow which I found to be full of black stinking water, I lay down flat in the open, twenty yards from where the track entered the scrub. From this point I had a clear view up the track for fifty yards, to where a bush, leaning over it, impeded my further view. If the tiger came down the track, as I expected him to, I decided to fire at him as soon as he cleared the obstruction.

After opening the rifle to make quite sure it was loaded, I threw off the safety-catch, and with elbows comfortably resting on the soft ground waited for the tiger to appear. I had not called since I came out on the plain, so to give him direction I now gave a low call, which he immediately answered from a distance of a hundred yards. If he came on at his usual pace, I judged he would clear the obstruction in thirty seconds. I counted this number very slowly, and went on counting up to eighty, when out of the corner of my eye I saw a movement to my right front, where the bushes approached to within ten yards of me. Turning my eyes in that direction I saw a great head projecting above the bushes, which here were four feet high. The tiger was only a foot or two inside the bushes, but all I could see of him was his head. As I very slowly swung the point of the rifle round and ran my eyes along the sights I noticed that his head was not quite square on to me, and as I was firing up and he was looking down, I aimed an inch below his right eye, pressed the trigger, and for the next half-hour nearly died of fright.

Instead of dropping dead as I expected him to, the tiger went straight up into the air above the bushes for his full length, falling backwards onto a tree a foot thick which had been blown down in a storm and was still green. With unbelievable fury he attacked this tree and tore it to bits, emitting as he did so roar upon roar, and what was even worse, a dreadful bloodcurdling sound as though he was savaging his worst enemy. The branches of the tree tossed about as though struck by a tornado, while the bushes on my side shook and bulged out, and every moment I expected to have him on top of me, for he had been looking at me when I fired, and knew where I was.



Too frightened even to recharge the rifle for fear the slight movement and sound should attract the attention of the tiger, I lay and sweated for half an hour with my finger on the left trigger. At last the branches of the tree and the bushes ceased waving about, and the roaring became less frequent, and eventually, to my great relief, ceased. For another half-hour I lay perfectly still, with arms cramped by the weight of the heavy rifle, and then started to pull myself backwards with my toes. After progressing for thirty yards in this manner I got to my feet, and, crouching low, made for the welcome shelter of the nearest tree. Here I remained for some minutes, and as all was now silent I turned and made for home.

## II

Next morning I returned accompanied by one of my men, an expert tree-climber. I had noticed the previous evening that there was a tree growing on the edge of the open ground, and about forty yards from where the tiger had fallen. We approached this tree very cautiously, and I stood behind it while the man climbed to the top. After a long and a careful scrutiny he looked down and shook his head, and when he rejoined me on the ground he told me that the bushes over a big area had been flattened down, but that the tiger was not in sight.

I sent him back to his perch on the tree with instructions to keep a sharp lookout and warn me if he saw any movement in the bushes, and went forward to have a look at the spot where the tiger had raged. He had raged to some purpose, for, in addition to tearing branches and great strips of wood off the tree, he had torn up several bushes by the roots, and bitten down others. Blood in profusion was sprinkled everywhere, and on the ground were two congealed pools, near one of which was lying a bit of bone two inches square, which I found on examination to be part of the tiger's skull.

No blood trail led away from this spot and this, combined with the two pools of blood, was proof that the tiger was still here when I left and that the precautions I had taken the previous evening had been very necessary,

for when I started on my ‘get-away’ I was only ten yards from the most dangerous animal in the world— a freshly wounded tiger. On circling round the spot I found a small smear of blood here and there on leaves that had brushed against his face. Noting that these indications of the tiger’s passage led in a direct line to a giant *semul* tree (*Bombax malabaricum*, the silk cotton tree.) two hundred yards away, I went back and climbed the tree my man was on in order to get a bird’s-eye view of the ground I should have to go over, for I had a very uneasy feeling that I should find him alive: a tiger shot in the head can live for days and can even recover from the wound. True, this tiger had a bit of his skull missing, and as I had never dealt with an animal in his condition before I did not know whether he was likely to live for a few hours or days, or live on to die of old age. For this reason I decided to treat him as an ordinary wounded tiger, and not to take any avoidable risks when following him up.

From my elevated position on the tree I saw that, a little to the left of the line to the *semul* tree, there were two trees, the nearer one thirty yards from where the blood was, and the other fifty yards further on. Leaving my man on the tree, I climbed down, picked up my rifle and a shot-gun and bag of a hundred cartridges, and very cautiously approached the nearer tree and climbed up it to a height of thirty feet, pulling the rifle and gun, which I had tied to one end of a strong cord, up after me. After fixing the rifle in a fork of the tree where it would be handy if needed, I started to spray the bushes with small shot, yard by yard up to the foot of the second tree. I did this with the object of locating the tiger, assuming he was alive and in that area, for a wounded tiger, on hearing a shot fired close to him, or on being struck by a pellet, will either growl or charge. Receiving no indication of the tiger’s presence I went to the second tree, and sprayed the bushes to within a few yards of the *semul* tree, firing the last shot at the tree itself. After this last shot I thought I heard a low growl, but it was not repeated and I put it down to my imagination. My bag of cartridges was now empty, so after recovering my man I called it a day, and went home.

When I returned next morning I found my friend the buffalo man feeding his buffaloes on the plain. He appeared to be very much relieved to see me, and the reason for this I learnt later. The grass was still wet with dew, but

we found a dry spot and there sat down to have a smoke and relate our experiences. My friend, as I have already told you, had done a lot of poaching, and having spent all his life in tiger-infested jungles tending his buffaloes, or shooting, his jungle knowledge was considerable.

After I had left him that day at the wide, open water-course, he had crossed to the far side and had sat down to listen for sounds coming from the direction in which I had gone. He had heard two tigers calling; he had heard my shot followed by the continuous roaring of a tiger, and very naturally concluded I had wounded one of the tigers and that it had killed me. On his return next morning to the same spot, he had been greatly mystified by hearing a hundred shots fired, and this morning, not being able to contain his curiosity any longer, he had come to see what had happened. Attracted by the smell of blood, his buffaloes had shown him where the tiger had fallen, and he had seen the patches of dry blood and had found the bit of bone. No animal in his opinion could possibly live for more than a few hours after having a bit of its skull blown away, and so sure was he that the tiger was dead that he offered to take his buffaloes into the jungle and find it for me. I had heard of this method of recovering tigers with the help of buffaloes but had never tried it myself, and after my friend had agreed to accepting compensation for any damage to his cattle I accepted his offer.

Rounding up the buffaloes, twenty-five in number, and keeping to the line I had sprinkled with shot the previous day, we made for the *semul* tree, followed by the buffaloes. Our progress was slow, for not only had we to move the chin-high bushes with our hands to see where to put our feet, but we also had frequently to check a very natural tendency on the part of the buffaloes to stray. As we approached the *semul* tree, where the bushes were lighter, I saw a little hollow filled with dead leaves that had been pressed flat and on which were several patches of blood, some dry, others in process of congealing, and one quite fresh; and when I put my hand to the ground I found it was warm. Incredible as it may appear, the tiger had lain in this hollow the previous day while I had expended a hundred cartridges, and had only moved off when he saw us and the buffaloes approaching. The buffaloes had now found the blood and were pawing up the ground and snorting, and as the prospect of being caught between a charging tiger and

angry buffaloes did not appeal to me, I took hold of my friend's arm, turned him round and made for the open plain, followed by the buffaloes. When we were back on safe ground I told the man to go home, and said I would return next day and deal with the tiger alone.

The path through the jungles that I had taken each day when coming from and going home ran for some distance over soft ground, and on this soft ground, on this fourth day, I saw the pug marks of a big male tiger. By following these pug marks I found the tiger had entered the dense brushwood a hundred yards to the right of the *semul* tree. Here was an unexpected complication, for if I now saw a tiger in this jungle I should not know— unless I got a very close look at it— whether it was the wounded or the unwounded one. However, this contingency would have to be dealt with when met, and in the meantime worrying would not help, so I entered the bushes and made for the hollow at the foot of the *semul* tree.

There was no blood trail to follow so I zigzagged through the bushes, into which it was impossible to see further than a few inches, for an hour or more, until I came to a ten-foot-wide dry watercourse. Before stepping down into this watercourse I looked up it, and saw the left hind leg and tail of a tiger. The tiger was standing perfectly still with its body and head hidden by a tree, and only this one leg visible. I raised the rifle to my shoulder, and then lowered it. To have broken the leg would have been easy, for the tiger was only ten yards away, and it would have been the right thing to do if its owner was the wounded animal; but there were two tigers in this area, and to have broken the leg of the wrong one would have doubled my difficulties, which were already considerable. Presently the leg was withdrawn and I heard the tiger moving away, and going to the spot where he had been standing I found a few drops of blood— too late now to regret not having broken that leg.

A quarter of a mile further on there was a little stream, and it was possible that the tiger, now recovering from his wound, was making for this stream. With the object of intercepting him or failing that, waiting for him at the water, I took a game path which I knew went to the stream and had proceeded along it for some distance when a sambur belled to my left, and



went dashing off through the jungle. It was evident now that I was abreast of the tiger, and I had only taken a few more steps when I heard the loud crack of a dry stick breaking as though some heavy animal had fallen on it; the sound had come from a distance of fifty yards and from the exact spot where the sambur had belled. The sambur had in unmistakable tones warned the jungle folk of the presence of a tiger, and the stick therefore could only have been broken by the same animal; so getting down on my hands and knees I started to crawl in the direction from which the sound had come.

The bushes here were from six to eight feet high, with dense foliage on the upper branches and very few leaves on the stems, so that I could see through them for a distance of ten to fifteen feet. I had covered thirty yards, hoping fervently that if the tiger charged he would come from in front (for in no other direction could I have fired), when I caught sight of something red on which the sun, drifting through the upper leaves, was shining; it might only be a bunch of dead leaves; on the other hand, it might be the tiger. I could get a better view of this object from two yards to the right so, lowering my head until my chin touched the ground, I crawled this distance with belly to ground, and on raising my head saw the tiger in front of me. He was crouching down looking at me, with the sun shining on his left shoulder, and on receiving my two bullets he rolled over on his side without making a sound.

As I stood over him and ran my eyes over his magnificent proportions it was not necessary to examine the pads of his feet to know that before me lay the Bachelor of Powalgarh.

The entry of the bullet fired four days previously was hidden by a wrinkle of skin, and at the back of his head was a big hole which, surprisingly, was perfectly clean and healthy.

The report of my rifle was, I knew, being listened for, so I hurried home to relieve anxiety, and while I related the last chapter of the hunt and drank a pot of tea my men were collecting.

Accompanied by my sister and Robin and a carrying party of twenty men, I returned to where the tiger was lying, and before he was roped to a pole my sister and I measured him from nose to tip of tail, and from tip of tail to nose. At home we again measured him to make quite sure we had made no mistake the first time. These measurements are valueless, for there were no independent witnesses present to certify them; they are however interesting as showing the accuracy with which experienced woodsmen can judge the length of a tiger from his pug marks. Wyndham, you will remember, said the tiger was ten feet between pegs, which would give roughly 10' 6" over curves; and while one *shikari* said he was 10' 5.09" over curves, the other said he was 10' 6" or a little more. Shot seven years after these estimates were made, my sister and I measured the tiger as being 10' 7" over curves.

I have told the story at some length, as I feel sure that those who hunted the tiger between 1920 and 1930 will be interested to know how the Bachelor of Powalgarh met his end.





## *The Mohan Man-Eater*

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### I

**E**IGHTEEN miles from our summer home in the Himalayas there is a long ridge running east and west, some 9,000 feet in height. On the upper slopes of the eastern end of this ridge there is a luxuriant growth of oat grass; below this grass the hill falls steeply away in a series of rock cliffs to the Kosi river below.

One day a party of women and girls from the village on the north face of the ridge were cutting the oat grass, when a tiger suddenly appeared in their midst. In the stampede that followed an elderly woman lost her footing, rolled down the steep slope, and disappeared over the cliff. The tiger, evidently alarmed by the screams of the women, vanished as mysteriously as it had appeared, and when the women had reassembled and recovered from their fright, they went down the grassy slope and, looking over the

cliff, saw their companion lying on a narrow ledge some distance below them.

The woman said she was badly injured— it was found later that she had broken a leg and fractured several ribs— and that she could not move. Ways and means of a rescue were discussed, and it was finally decided that it was a job for men; and as no one appeared to be willing to remain at the spot, they informed the injured woman that they were going back to the village for help. The woman begged not to be left alone, however, and at her entreaty a girl, sixteen years of age, volunteered to stay with her. So, while the rest of the party set off for the village, the girl made her way down to the right, where a rift in the cliff enabled her to get a foothold on the ledge.

This ledge only extended half-way across the face of the cliff and ended, a few yards from where the woman was lying, in a shallow depression. Fearing that she might fall off the ledge and be killed on the rocks hundreds of feet below the woman asked the girl to move her to this depression, and this difficult and dangerous feat the girl successfully accomplished. There was only room for one in the depression, so that the girl squatted, as only an Indian can squat, on the ledge facing the woman.

The village was four miles away, and once, and once again, the two on the ledge speculated as to the length of time it would take their companions to get back to the village; what men they were likely to find in the village at that time of day; how long it would take to explain what had happened, and finally, how long it would take the rescue party to arrive.

Conversation had been carried on in whispers for fear the tiger might be lurking in the vicinity and hear them and then, suddenly, the woman gave a gasp and the girl, seeing the look of horror on her face and the direction in which she was looking, turned her head and over her shoulder saw the tiger, stepping out of the rift in the cliff onto the ledge.

Few of us, I imagine, have escaped that worst of all nightmares in which, while our limbs and vocal cords are paralysed with fear, some terrible beast in monstrous form approaches to destroy us; the nightmare from which,

sweating fear in every pore, we waken with a cry of thankfulness to Heaven that it was only a dream. There was no such happy awakening from the nightmare of that unfortunate girl, and little imagination is needed to picture the scene. A rock cliff with a narrow ledge running partly across it and ending in a little depression in which an injured woman is lying; a young girl frozen with terror squatting on the ledge, and a tiger slowly creeping towards her; retreat in every direction cut off, and no help at hand.

Mothi Singh, an old friend of mine, was in the village visiting a sick daughter when the women arrived, and he headed the rescue party. When this party went down the grassy slope and looked over the cliff, they saw the woman lying in a swoon, and on the ledge they saw splashes of blood.

The injured woman was carried back to the village, and when she had been revived and had told her story, Mothi Singh set out on his eighteen-mile walk to me. He was an old man well over sixty, but he scouted the suggestion that he was tired and needed a rest, so we set off together to make investigations. But there was nothing that I could do, for twenty-four hours had elapsed and all that the tiger had left of the brave young girl, who had volunteered to stay with her injured companion, were a few bits of bone and her torn and blood-stained clothes.

This was the first human being killed by the tiger which later received recognition in Government records as 'The Mohan Man-eater'.

After killing the girl, the tiger went down the Kosi valley for the winter, killing on its way— among other people— two men of the Public Works Department, and the daughter-in-law of our member of the Legislative Council. As summer approached it returned to the scene of its first kill, and for several years thereafter its beat extended up and down the Kosi valley from Kakrighat to Gargia— a distance of roughly forty miles— until it finally took up its quarters on the hill above Mohan, in the vicinity of a village called Kartkanoula.

At the District Conference, to which reference has been made in a previous story, the three man-eating tigers operating at that time in the

Kumaon Division were classed as follows in their order of importance: —

1st— Chowgarh, Naini Tal District.

2nd— Mohan, Almora District.

3rd— Kanda, Garhwal District.

After the Chowgarh tiger had been accounted for I was reminded by Baines, Deputy Commissioner, Almora, that only a part of my promise made at the conference had been fulfilled, and that the Mohan tiger was next on the list. The tiger, he stated, was becoming more active and a greater menace every day, and had during the previous week killed three human beings, residents of Kartkanoula village. It was to this village Baines now suggested I should go.

While I had been engaged with the Chowgarh tiger, Baines had persuaded some sportsmen to go to Kartkanoula, but though they had sat up over human and animal kills they had failed to make contact with the man-eater and had returned to their depot at Ranikhet. Baines informed me I should now have the ground to myself— a very necessary precaution, for nerves wear thin when hunting man-eaters, and accidents are apt to result when two or more parties are hunting the same animal.

## II

It was on a blistering hot day in May that I, my two servants, and the six Garhwalis I had brought with me from Naini Tal alighted from the 1 p.m. train at Ramnagar and set off on our twenty-four-mile foot journey to Kartkanoula. Our first stage was only seven miles, but it was evening before we arrived at Gargia. I had left home in a hurry on receiving Baines' letter, and had not had time to ask for permission to occupy the Gargia Forest Bungalow, so I slept out in the open.

On the far side of the Kosi river at Gargia there is a cliff several hundred feet high, and while I was trying to get sleep I heard what I thought were

stones falling off the cliff on the rocks below. The sound was exactly the same as would be made by bringing two stones violently together. After some time this sound worried me, as sounds will on a hot night, and as the moon was up and the light good enough to avoid stepping on snakes, I left my camp bed and set out to make investigations. I found that the sound was being made by a colony of frogs in a marsh by the side of the road. I have heard land-, water- and tree-frogs making strange sounds in different parts of the world, but I have never heard anything so strange as the sound made by the frogs at Gargia in the month of May.

After a very early start next morning we did the twelve miles to Mohan before the sun got hot, and while my men were cooking their food and my servants were preparing my breakfast, the *chowkidar* of the bungalow, two Forest Guards, and several men from the Mohan bazaar, entertained me with stories of the man-eater, the most recent of which concerned the exploits of a fisherman who had been fishing the Kosi river. One of the Forest Guards claimed to be the proud hero of this exploit, and he described very graphically how he had been out one day with the fisherman and, on turning a bend in the river, they had come face to face with the man-eater; and how the fisherman had thrown away his rod and had grabbed the rifle off his— the Forest Guard's— shoulder; and how they had run for their lives with the tiger close on their heels. 'Did you look back?' I asked. 'No, sahib,' said he, pitying my ignorance. 'How could a man who was running for his life from a man-eater look back?'; and how the fisherman, who was leading by a head, in a thick patch of grass had fallen over a sleeping bear, after which there had been great confusion and shouting and everyone, including the bear, had run in different directions and the fisherman had got lost; and how after a long time the fisherman had eventually found his way back to the bungalow and had said a lot to him— the Forest Guard— on the subject of having run away with his rifle and left him emptyhanded to deal with a man-eating tiger and an angry bear. The Forest Guard ended up his recital by saying that the fisherman had left Mohan the following day saying that he had hurt his leg when he fell over the bear, and that anyway there were no fish to be caught in the Kosi river.

By midday we were ready to continue our journey, and, with many warnings from the small crowd that had collected to see us off to keep a sharp lookout for the man-eater while going through the dense forest that lay ahead of us, we set out on our four-thousand-foot climb to Kartkanoula.

Our progress was slow, for my men were carrying heavy loads and the track was excessively steep, and the heat terrific. There had been some trouble in the upper villages a short time previously, necessitating the dispatch from Naini Tal of a small police force, and I had been advised to take everything I needed for myself and my men with me, as owing to the unsettled conditions it would not be possible to get any stores locally. This was the reason for the heavy loads my men were carrying.

After many halts we reached the edge of the cultivated land in the late afternoon, and as there was now no further danger to be apprehended for my men from the man-eater, I left them and set out alone for the Foresters' Hut which is visible from Mohan, and which had been pointed out to me by the Forest Guards as the best place for my stay while at Kartkanoula.

The hut is on the ridge of the high hill overlooking Mohan, and as I approached it along the level stretch of road running across the face of the hill, in turning a corner in a ravine where there is some dense undergrowth, I came on a woman filling an earthenware pitcher from a little trickle of water flowing down a wooden trough. Apprehending that my approach on rubber-soled shoes would frighten her, I coughed to attract her attention, noticed that she started violently as I did so, and a few yards beyond her, stopped to light a cigarette. A minute or two later I asked, without turning my head, if it was safe for anyone to be in this lonely spot, and after a little hesitation the woman answered that it was not safe, but that water had to be fetched and as there was no one in the home to accompany her, she had come alone. Was there no man? Yes, there was a man, but he was in the fields ploughing, and in any case it was the duty of women to fetch water. How long would it take to fill the pitcher? Only a little longer. The woman had got over her fright and shyness, and I was now subjected to a close cross-examination. Was I a policeman? No. Was I a Forest Officer? No, Then who was I? Just a man. Why had I come? To try and help the people



of Kartkanoula. In what way? By shooting the man-eater. Where had I heard about the man-eater? Why had I come alone? Where were my men? How many were there? How long would I stay? And so on.

The pitcher was not declared full until the woman had satisfied her curiosity, and as she walked behind me she pointed to one of several ridges running down the south face of the hill, and pointing out a big tree growing on a grassy slope said that three days previously the man-eater had killed a woman under it; this tree I noted, with interest, was only two or three hundred yards from my objective—the Foresters' Hut. We had now come to a footpath running up the hill, and as she took it the woman said the village from which she had come was just round the shoulder of the hill, and added that she was now quite safe.

Those of you who know the women of India will realize that I had accomplished a lot, especially when it is remembered that there had recently been trouble in this area with the police. So far from alarming the woman and thereby earning the hostility of the entire countryside I had, by standing by while she filled her pitcher and answering a few questions, gained a friend who would in the shortest time possible acquaint the whole population of the village of my arrival; that I was not an officer of any kind, and that the sole purpose of my visit was to try to rid them of the man-eater.

### III

The Foresters' Hut was on a little knoll some twenty yards to the left of the road, and as the door was only fastened with a chain I opened it and walked inside. The room was about ten feet square and quite clean, but had a mouldy disused smell; I learnt later that the hut had not been occupied since the advent of the man-eater in that area eighteen months previously. On either side of the main room there were two narrow slips of rooms, one used as a kitchen, and the other as a fuel store. The hut would make a nice safe shelter for my men, and having opened the back door to let a current of air blow through the room, I went outside and selected a spot between the hut

and the road for my 40-lb. tent. There was no furniture of any kind in the hut, so I sat down on a rock near the road to await the arrival of my men.

The ridge at this point was about fifty yards wide, and as the hut was on the south edge of the ridge, and the village on the north face of the hill, the latter was not visible from the former. I had been sitting on the rock for about ten minutes when a head appeared over the crest from the direction of the village, followed by a second and a third. My friend the watercarrier had not been slow in informing the village of my arrival.

When strangers meet in India and wish to glean information on any particular subject from each other, it is customary to refrain from broaching the subject that has brought them together— whether accidentally or of set purpose— until the very last moment, and to fill up the interval by finding out everything concerning each other's domestic and private affairs; as for instance, whether married and if so the number and sex of children and their ages; if not married, why not; occupation and amount of pay, and so on. Questions that would in any other part of the world earn one a thick ear are in India— and especially in our hills— asked so artlessly and universally that no one who has lived among the people dreams of taking offence at them.

In my conversation with the woman I had answered many of the set questions, and the ones of a domestic nature which it is not permissible for a woman to ask of a man were being put to me when my men arrived. They had filled a kettle at the little spring, and in an incredibly short time dry sticks were collected, a fire lit, the kettle boiled, and tea and biscuits produced. As I opened a tin of condensed milk I heard the men asking my servants why condensed milk was being used instead of fresh milk and receiving the answer that there was no fresh milk; and further that, as it had been apprehended that owing to some previous trouble in this area no fresh milk would be available, a large supply of tinned milk had been brought. The men appeared to be very distressed on hearing this and after a whispered conversation one of them, who I learnt later was the Headman of Kartkanoula, addressed me and said it was an insult to them to have brought tinned milk, when all the resources of the village were at my disposal. I

admitted my mistake, which I said was due to my being a stranger to that locality, and told the Headman that if he had any milk to spare I would gladly purchase a small quantity for my daily requirements, but that beyond the milk, I wanted for nothing.

My loads had now been unstrapped, while more men had arrived from the village, and when I told my servants where I wanted them to pitch my tent there was a horrified exclamation from the assembled villagers. Live in a tent— indeed! Was I ignorant of the fact that there was a man-eating tiger in this area and that it used this road regularly every night? If I doubted their word, let me come and see the claw marks on the doors of the houses where the road ran through the upper end of the village. Moreover, if the tiger did not eat me in the tent it would certainly eat my men in the hut, if I was not there to protect them. This last statement made my men prick up their ears and add their entreaties to the advice of the villagers, so eventually I agreed to stay in the main room, while my two servants occupied the kitchen, and the six Garhwalis the fuel store.

The subject of the man-eater having been introduced, it was now possible for me to pursue it without admitting that it was the one object I had wished to introduce from the moment the first man had put his head over the ridge. The path leading down to the tree where the tiger had claimed its last victim was pointed out to me, and the time of day, and the circumstances tinder which the woman had been killed, explained. The road along which the tiger came every night, I was informed, ran eastward to Baital Ghat with a branch down to Mohan, and westward to Chaknakl on the Ramganga river. The road going west, after running through the upper part of the village and through cultivated land for half a mile, turned south along the face of the hill, and on rejoining the ridge on which the hut was, followed the ridge right down to Chaknakl. This portion of the road between Kartkanoula and Chaknakl, some six miles long, was considered to be very dangerous, and had not been used since the advent of the man-eater; I subsequently found that after leaving the cultivated land the road entered dense tree and scrub jungle, which extended right down to the river.

The main cultivation of Kartkanoula village is on the north face of the hill, and beyond this cultivated land there are several small ridges with deep ravines between. On the nearest of these ridges, and distant about a thousand yards from the Foresters' Hut, there is a big pine tree. Near this tree, some ten days previously, the tiger had killed, partly eaten and left, a woman, and as the three sportsmen who were staying in a Forest Bungalow four miles away were unable to climb the pine tree the villagers had put up three machans in three separate trees, at distances varying from one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards from the kill, and the machans had been occupied by the sportsmen and their servants a little before sunset. There was a young moon at the time, and after it had set the villagers heard a number of shots being fired, and when they questioned the servants next morning the servants said they did not know what had been fired at for they themselves had not seen anything.

Two days later a cow had been killed over which the sportsmen had sat, and again; as on the previous occasion, shots had been fired after the moon had set. It is these admittedly sporting but unsuccessful attempts to bag man-eaters that makes them so wary, and the more difficult to shoot the longer they live.

The villagers gave me one very interesting item of news in connexion with the tiger. They said they always knew when it had come into the village by the low moaning sound it made. On questioning them closely I learnt that at times the sound was continuous as the tiger passed between the houses, while at other times the sound stopped for sometimes short, and other times long periods.

From this information I concluded (a) that the tiger was suffering from a wound, (b) that the wound was of such a nature that the tiger only felt it when in motion, and that therefore, (c) the wound was in one of its legs. I was assured that the tiger had not been wounded by any local shikari, or by any of the sportsmen from Ranikhet who had sat up for it; however, this was of little importance, for the tiger had been a man-eater for years, and the wound that I believed it was suffering from might have been the original

cause of its becoming a man-eater. A very interesting point and one that could only be cleared up by examining the tiger— after it was dead.

The men were curious to know why I was so interested in the sound made by the tiger, and when I told them that it indicated the animal had a wound in one of its legs and that the wound had been caused either by a bullet, or porcupine quills, they disagreed with my reasoning and said that on the occasions they had seen the tiger it appeared to be in sound condition, and further, that the ease with which it killed and carried off its victims was proof that it was not crippled in any way. However, what I told them was remembered and later earned me the reputation of being gifted with second sight.

## IV

When passing through Ramnagar I had asked the Tahsildar to purchase two young male buffaloes for me and to send them to Mohan, where my men would take them over.

I told the villagers I intended tying up one of the buffaloes near the tree where three days previously the woman had been killed and the other on the road to Chaknakl, and they said they could think of no better sites, but that they would talk the matter over among themselves, and let me know in the morning if they had any other suggestions to make. Night was now drawing in, and before leaving the Headman promised to send word to all the adjoining villages in the morning to let them know of my arrival, the reason for my coming, and to impress on them the urgency of letting me know without loss of time of any kills, or attacks by the tiger in their areas.

The musty smell in the room had much decreased though it was still noticeable. However, I paid no attention to it, and after a bath and dinner put two stones against the doors— there being no other way of keeping them shut— and being bone-tired after my day's exertions went to bed and to sleep. I am a light sleeper, and two or three hours later I awoke on hearing an animal moving about in the jungle. It came right up to the back door. Getting hold of a rifle and a torch, I moved the stone aside with my

foot and heard an animal moving off as I opened the door— it might from the sound it was making have been the tiger, but it might also have been a leopard or a porcupine. However, the jungle was too thick for me to see what it was. Back in the room and with the stone once more in position, I noticed I had developed a sore throat, which I attributed to having sat in the wind after the hot walk up from Mohan; but when my servant pushed the door open and brought in my early-morning cup of tea, I found I was suffering from an attack of laryngitis, due possibly to my having slept in a long-disused hut, the roof of which was swarming with bats.

My servant informed me that he and his companion had escaped infection, but that the six Garhwalis in the fuel store were all suffering from the same complaint as I was. My stock of medicine consisted of a two-ounce bottle of iodine and a few tablets of quinine, and on rummaging in my gun-case I found a small paper packet of permanganate which my sister had provided for me on a previous occasion. The packet was soaked through with gun oil, but the crystals were still soluble, and I put a liberal quantity of the crystals into a tin of hot water, together with some iodine. The resulting gargle was very potent, and while it blackened our teeth it did much to relieve the soreness in our throats.

After an early breakfast I sent four men down to Mohan to bring up the two buffaloes, and myself set off to prospect the ground where the woman had been killed. From the directions I had received overnight I had no difficulty in finding the spot where the tiger had attacked and killed the woman, as she was tying the grass she had cut into a bundle. The grass, and the rope she was using, were lying just as they had been left, as were also two bundles of grass left by her companions when they had run off in fright to the village. The men had told me that the body of the woman had not been found, but from the fact that three perfectly good lengths of rope and the dead woman's sickle had been left in the jungle, I am inclined to think that no attempt had been made to find her.

The woman had been killed at the upper end of a small landslide, and the tiger had taken her down the slide and into a thick patch of undergrowth. Here the tiger had waited, possibly to give the two women time to get out of

sight, and had then crossed the ridge visible from the hut, after which it had gone with its kill straight down the hill for a mile or more into dense tree and scrub jungle. The tracks were now four days old, and as there was nothing to be gained by following them further, I turned back to the hut.

The climb back to the ridge was a very steep one, and when I reached the hut at about midday I found an array of pots and pans of various shapes and sizes on the verandah, all containing milk. In contrast to the famine of the day before there was now abundance, sufficient milk in fact for me to have bathed in. My servants informed me they had protested to no effect and that each man had said, as he deposited his vessel on the verandah, that he would take good care that I used no more condensed milk while I remained in their midst.

I did not expect the men to return from Mohan with the buffaloes before nightfall, so after lunch I set out to have a look at the road to Chaknakl.

From the hut the hill sloped gradually upwards to a height of about five hundred feet, and was roughly triangular in shape. The road, after running through cultivated land for half a mile, turned sharply to the left, went across a steep rocky hill until it regained the ridge, and then turned to the right and followed the ridge down to Chaknakl. The road was level for a short distance after coming out on the ridge, and then went steeply down, the gradient in places being eased by hairpin bends.

I had the whole afternoon before me, and examined about three miles of the road very carefully. When a tiger uses a road regularly it invariably leaves signs of its passage by making scratch marks on the side of the road. These scratch marks, made for the same purpose as similar marks made by domestic cats and all other members of the cat family, are of very great interest to the sportsman, for they provide him with the following very useful information, (1) whether the animal that has made the mark is a male or a female, (2) the direction in which it was travelling, (3) the length of time that has elapsed since it passed, (4) the direction and approximate distance of its headquarters, (5) the nature of its kills, and finally (6) whether the animal has recently had a meal of human flesh. The value of

this easily-acquired information to one who is hunting a man-eater on strange ground will be easily understood. Tigers leave their pug marks on the roads they use and these pug marks can provide one with quite a lot of useful information, as for instance the direction and speed at which the animal was travelling, its sex and age, whether all four limbs are sound, and if not sound, which particular limb, is defective.

The road I was on had through long disuse got overgrown with short stiff grass and was therefore not, except in one or two damp places, a good medium on which to leave pug marks. One of these damp places was within a few yards of where the road came out on the ridge, and just below this spot there was a green and very stagnant pool of water; a regular drinking place for sambur.

I found several scratch marks just round the corner where the road turned to the left after leaving the cultivated ground, the most recent of which was three days old. Two hundred yards from these scratch marks the road, for a third of its width, ran under an overhanging rock. This rock was ten feet high and at the top of it there was a flat piece of ground two or three yards wide, which was only visible from the road when approaching the rock from the village side. On the ridge I found more scratch marks, but I did not find any pug marks until I got to the first hairpin bend. Here, in cutting across the bend, the tiger had left its tracks where it had jumped down onto some soft earth. The tracks, which were a day old, were a little distorted, but even so it was possible to see that they had been made by a big, old, male tiger.

When one is moving in an area in which a man-eating tiger is operating progress is of necessity very slow, for every obstruction in one's line of walk, be it a bush, a tree, rock, or an inequality in the ground capable of concealing death, has to be cautiously approached, while at the same time, if a wind is not blowing— and there was no wind that evening— a careful and constant lookout has to be maintained behind and on either side. Further, there was much of interest to be looked at, for it was the month of May, when orchids at this elevation— 4,000 to 5,000 feet— are at their best, and I have never seen a greater variety or a greater wealth of bloom



than the forests on that hill had to show. The beautiful white butterfly orchid was in greatest profusion, and every second tree of any size appeared to have decked itself out with them.

It was here that I first saw a bird that Prater of the Bombay Natural History Society later very kindly identified for me as the Mountain Crag Martin, a bird of a uniform ash colour, with a slight tinge of pink on its breast, and in size a little smaller than a Rosy Pastor. These birds had their broods with them, and while the young ones— four to a brood— sat in a row on a dry twig at the top of a high tree, the parent birds kept darting away— often to a distance of two or three hundred yards— to catch insects. The speed at which they flew was amazing, and I am quite sure there is nothing in feathers in North India, not excluding our winter visitor the great Tibetan Swallow, that these Martins could not make rings round. Another thing about these birds that was very interesting was their wonderful eyesight. On occasions they would fly in a dead straight line for several hundred yards before turning and coming back. It was not possible, at the speed they were going, that they were chasing insects on these long flights, and as after each flight the bird invariably thrust some minute object into one of the gaping mouths, I believe they were able to see insects at a range at which they would not have been visible to the human eye through the most powerful field-glasses.

Safeguarding my neck, looking out for tracks, enjoying nature generally, and listening to all the jungle sounds— a sambur a mile away down the hillside in the direction of Mohan was warning the jungle folk of the presence of a tiger, and a *kakar* and a *langur* (Entellus monkey) on the road to Chaknakl were warning other jungle folk of the presence of a leopard— time passed quickly, and I found myself back at the overhanging rock as the sun was setting. As I approached this rock I marked it as being quite the most dangerous spot in all the ground I had so far gone over. A tiger lying on the grass-covered bit of ground above the rock would only have to wait until anyone going either up or down the road was under or had passed it to have them at his mercy— a very dangerous spot indeed, and one that needed remembering.

When I got back to the hut I found the two buffaloes had arrived, but it was too late to do anything with them that evening.

My servants had kept a fire going most of the day in the hut, the air of which was now sweet and clean, but even so I was not going to risk sleeping in a closed room again; so I made them cut two thorn bushes and wedge them firmly into the doorways before going to bed. There was no movement in the jungle near the back door that night, and after a sound sleep I woke in the morning with my throat very much better.

I spent most of the morning talking to the village people and listening to the tales they had to tell of the man-eater and the attempts that had been made to shoot it, and after lunch I tied up one buffalo on the small ridge the tiger had crossed when carrying away the woman, and the other at the hairpin bend where I had seen the pug marks.

Next morning I found both buffaloes sleeping peacefully after having eaten most of the big feed of grass I had provided them with. I had tied bells round the necks of both animals, and the absence of any sound from these bells as I approached each buffalo gave me two disappointments for, as I have said, I found both of them asleep. That evening I changed the position of the second buffalo from the hairpin bend to where the road came out on the ridge, close to the pool of stagnant water.

The methods most generally employed in tiger shooting can briefly be described as (a) sitting up, and (b) beating, and young male buffaloes are used as bait in both cases. The procedure followed is to select the area most convenient for a sit-up, or for a beat, and to tie the bait out in the late evening using a rope which the bait cannot, but which the tiger can, break; and when the bait is taken to either sit up over the kill on a *machan* in a tree, or beat the cover into which the kill has been taken.

In the present case neither of these methods was feasible. My throat, though very much better, was still sore and it would not have been possible for me to have sat up for any length of time without coughing, and a beat over that vast area of heavily wooded and broken ground would have been

hopeless even if I had been able to muster a thousand men, so I decided to stalk the tiger, and to this end carefully sited my two buffaloes and tied them to stout saplings with four one-inch-thick hemp ropes, and left them out in the jungle for the whole twenty-four hours.

I now stalked the buffaloes in turn each morning as soon as there was sufficient light to shoot by, and again in the evening, for tigers, be they man-eaters or not, kill as readily in the day as they do at night in areas in which they are not disturbed, and during the day, while I waited for news from outlying villages, nursed my throat, and rested, my six Garhwalis fed and watered the buffaloes.

On the fourth evening when I was returning at sunset after visiting the buffalo on the ridge, as I came round a bend in the road thirty yards from the overhanging rock, I suddenly, and for the first time since my arrival at Kartkanoula, felt I was in danger, and that the danger that threatened me was on the rock in front of me. For five minutes I stood perfectly still with my eyes fixed on the upper edge of the rock, watching for movement. At that short range the flicker of an eyelid would have caught my eyes, but there was not even this small movement; and after going forward ten paces, I again stood watching for several minutes. The fact that I had seen no movement did not in any way reassure me—the man-eater was on the rock, of that I was sure; and the question was, what was I going to do about it? The hill, as I have already told you, was very steep, had great rocks jutting out of it, and was overgrown with long grass and tree and scrub jungle. Bad as the going was, had it been earlier in the day I would have gone back and worked round and above the tiger to try to get a shot at him, but with only half an hour of daylight left, and the best part of a mile still to go, it would have been madness to have left the road. So, slipping up the safety-catch and putting the rifle to my shoulder, I started to pass the rock.

The road here was about eight feet wide, and going to the extreme outer edge I started walking crab-fashion, feeling each step with my feet before putting my weight down to keep from stepping off into space. Progress was slow and difficult, but as I drew level with the overhanging rock and then began to pass it, hope rose high that the tiger would remain where he was

until I reached that part of the road from which the flat bit of ground above the rock, on which he was lying, was visible. The tiger, however, having failed to catch me off my guard was taking no chances, and I had just got clear of the rock when I heard a low muttered growl above me, and a little later first a *kakar* went off barking to the right, and then two hind sambur started belling near the crest of the triangular hill.

The tiger had got away with a sound skin, but for the matter of that, so had I, so there was no occasion for regrets, and from the place on the hill where the sambur said he was, I felt sure he would hear the bell I had hung round the neck of the buffalo that was tied on the ridge near the stagnant pool.

When I reached the cultivated land I found a group of men waiting for me. They had heard the *kakar* and sambur and were very disappointed that I had not seen the tiger, but cheered up when I told them I had great hopes for the morrow.

## V

During the night a dust-storm came on, followed by heavy rain, and I found to my discomfort that the roof of the hut was very porous. However, I eventually found a spot where it was leaking less than in others, dragged my camp bed to it and continued my sleep. It was a brilliantly clear morning when I awoke; the rain had washed the heat haze and dust out of the atmosphere, and every leaf and blade of grass was glistening in the newly risen sun.

Hitherto I had visited the nearer buffalo first, but this morning I had an urge to reverse the daily procedure, and after instructing my men to wait until the sun was well up and then go to feed and water the nearer buffalo, I set off with high hopes down the Chaknakl road; having first cleaned and oiled my 450/400 rifle—a very efficient weapon, and a good and faithful friend of many years' standing.

The overhanging rock that I passed with such trouble the previous evening did not give me a moment's uneasiness now, and after passing it I started looking for tracks, for the rain had softened the surface of the road. I saw nothing however until I came to the damp place on the road, which, as I have said, was on the near side of the ridge and close to the pool where the buffalo was tied. Here in the soft earth I found the pug marks of the tiger, made before the storm had come on, and going in the direction of the ridge. Close to this spot there is a rock about three feet high, on the khud side of the road. On the previous occasions that I had stalked down the road I had found that by standing on this rock I could look over a hump in the road and see the buffalo where it was tied forty yards away. When I now climbed on to the rock and slowly raised my head, I found that the buffalo had gone. This discovery was as disconcerting as it was inexplicable. To prevent the tiger from carrying the buffalo away to some distant part of the jungle, where the only method of getting a shot would have been by sitting up on the ground or in a tree— a hopeless proceeding with my throat in the condition it was in— I had used four thicknesses of strong one-inch-thick hemp rope, and even so the tiger had got away with the kill.

I was wearing the thinnest of rubber-soled shoes, and very silently I approached the sapling to which the buffalo had been tied and examined the ground. The buffalo had been killed before the storm, but had been carried away after the rain had stopped, without any portion of it having been eaten. Three of the ropes I had twisted together had been gnawed through, and the fourth had been broken. Tigers do not usually gnaw through ropes; however, this one had done so, and had carried off the kill down the hill facing Mohan. My plans had been badly upset, but very fortunately the rain had come to my assistance. The thick carpet of dead leaves which the day before had been as dry as tinder were now wet and pliable, and provided I made no mistakes, the pains the tiger had been to in getting away with the kill might yet prove his undoing.

When entering a jungle in which rapid shooting might at any moment become necessary, I never feel happy until I have reassured myself that my rifle is loaded. To pull a trigger in an emergency and wake up in the Happy Hunting Grounds— or elsewhere— because one had omitted to load a

weapon, would be one of those acts of carelessness for which no excuse could be found; so though I knew I had loaded my rifle before I came to the overhanging rock, I now opened it and extracted the cartridges. I changed one that was discoloured and dented, and after moving the safety-catch up and down several times to make sure it was working smoothly— I have never carried a cocked weapon— I set off to follow the drag.

This word 'drag', when it is used to describe the mark left on the ground by a tiger when it is moving its kill from one place to another, is misleading, for a tiger when taking its kill any distance (I have seen a tiger carry a full-grown cow for four miles) does not drag it, it carries it; and if the kill is too heavy to be carried, it is left. The drag is distinct or faint according to the size of the animal that is being carried, and the manner in which it is being held. For instance, assuming the kill is a sambur and the tiger is holding it by the neck the hind quarters will trail on the ground leaving a distinct drag mark. On the other hand, if the sambur is being held by the middle of the back, there may be a faint drag mark, or there may be none at all.

In the present case the tiger was carrying the buffalo by the neck, and the hind quarters trailing on the ground were leaving a drag mark it was easy to follow. For a hundred yards the tiger went diagonally across the face of the hill until he came to a steep clay bank. In attempting to cross this bank he had slipped and relinquished his hold of the kill, which had rolled down the hill for thirty or forty yards until it had fetched up against a tree. On recovering the kill the tiger picked it up by the back, and from now on only one leg occasionally touched the ground, leaving a faint drag mark, which nevertheless, owing to the hillside being carpeted with bracken, was not very difficult to follow. In his fall the tiger had lost direction, and he now appeared to be undecided where to take the kill. First he went a couple of hundred yards to the right, then a hundred yards straight down the hill through a dense patch of ringals (stunted bamboo). After forcing his way with considerable difficulty through the ringals he turned to the left and went diagonally across the hill for a few hundred yards until he came to a great rock, to the right of which he skirted. This rock was flush with the ground on the approach side, and, rising gently for twenty feet, appeared to

project out over a hollow or dell of considerable extent. If there was a cave or recess under the projection, it would be a very likely place for the tiger to have taken his kill to, so leaving the drag I stepped on to the rock and moved forward very slowly, examining every yard of ground below, and on either side of me, as it came into view. On reaching the end of the projection and looking over I was disappointed to find that the hill came up steeply to meet the rock, and that there was no cave or recess under it as I had expected there would be.





As the point of the rock offered a good view of the dell and of the surrounding jungle—and was comparatively safe from an attack from the man-eater—I sat down; and as I did so, I caught sight of a red and white object in a dense patch of short undergrowth, forty or fifty yards directly below me. When one is looking for a tiger in heavy jungle everything red that catches the eye is immediately taken for the tiger, and here, not only could I see the red of the tiger, but I could also see his stripes. For a long minute I watched the object intently, and then, as the face you are told to look for in a freak picture suddenly resolves itself, I saw that the object I was looking at was the kill, and not the tiger; the red was blood where he had recently been eating, and the stripes were the ribs from which he had torn away the skin. I was thankful for having held my fire for that long minute, for in a somewhat similar case a friend of mine ruined his chance of bagging a very fine tiger by putting two bullets into a kill over which he had intended sitting; fortunately he was a good shot, and the two men whom he had sent out in advance to find the kill and put up a *machan* over it, and who were, at the time he fired, standing near the kill screened by a bush, escaped injury.

When a tiger that has not been disturbed leaves his kill out in the open, it can be assumed that he is lying up close at hand to guard the kill from vultures and other scavengers, and the fact that I could not see the tiger did not mean that he was not lying somewhere close by in the dense undergrowth.

Tigers are troubled by flies and do not lie long in one position, so I decided to remain where I was and watch for movement; but hardly had I come to this decision, when I felt an irritation in my throat. I had not quite recovered from my attack of laryngitis and the irritation grew rapidly worse until it became imperative for me to cough. The usual methods one employs on these occasions, whether in church or the jungle, such as holding the breath and swallowing hard, gave no relief until it became a case of cough, or burst; and in desperation I tried to relieve my throat by giving the alarm-call of the langur. Sounds are difficult to translate into words and for those of you who are not acquainted with our jungles I would try to describe this alarm-call, which can be heard for half a mile, as khok, khok, khok,

repeated again and again at short intervals, and ending up with khokorror. All langurs do not call at tigers, but the ones in our hills certainly do, and as this tiger had probably heard the call every day of his life it was the one sound I could make to which he would not pay the slightest attention. My rendering of the call in this emergency did not sound very convincing, but it had the desired effect of removing the irritation from my throat.

For half an hour thereafter I continued to sit on the rock, watching for movement and listening for news from the jungle folk, and when I had satisfied myself that the tiger was not anywhere within my range of vision, I got off the rock, and, moving with the utmost caution, went down to the kill.

## VI

I regret I am not able to tell you what weight of flesh a full-grown tiger can consume at a meal, but you will have some idea of his capacity when I tell you he can eat a sambur in two days, and a buffalo in three, leaving possibly a small snack for the fourth day.

The buffalo I had tied up was not full-grown but he was by no means a small animal, and the tiger had eaten approximately half of him. With a meal of that dimension inside of him I felt sure he had not gone far, and as the ground was still wet, and would remain so for another hour or two, I decided to find out in what direction he had gone, and if possible, stalk him.

There was a confusion of tracks near the kill but by going round in widening circles I found the track the tiger had made when leaving. Soft-footed animals are a little more difficult to track than hard-footed ones, yet after long years of experience tracking needs as little effort as a gun dog exerts when following a scent. As silently and as slowly as a shadow I took up the track, knowing that the tiger would be close at hand. When I had gone a hundred yards I came on a flat bit of ground, twenty feet square, and carpeted with that variety of short soft grass that has highly scented roots; on this grass the tiger had lain, the imprint of his body being clearly visible.

As I was looking at the imprint and guessing at the size of the animal that had made it, I saw some of the blades of grass that had been crushed down, spring erect. This indicated that the tiger had been gone only a minute or so.

You will have some idea of the lay-out when I tell you that the tiger had brought the kill down from the north, and on leaving it had gone west, and that the rock on which I had sat, the kill, and the spot where I was now standing, formed the points of a triangle, one side of which was forty yards, and the other two sides a hundred yards long.

My first thought on seeing the grass spring erect was that the tiger had seen me and moved off, but this I soon found was not likely, for neither the rock nor the kill was visible from the grass plot, and that he had not seen me and moved after I had taken up his track I was quite certain. Why then had he left his comfortable bed and gone away? The sun shining on the back of my neck provided the answer. It was now nine o'clock of an unpleasantly hot May morning, and a glance at the sun and the tree-tops over which it had come showed that it had been shining on the grass for ten minutes. The tiger had evidently found it too hot, and gone away a few minutes before my arrival to look for a shady spot.

I have told you that the grass plot was twenty feet square. On the far side to that from which I had approached there was a fallen tree, lying north and south. This tree was about four feet in diameter, and as it was lying along the edge of the grass plot in the middle of which I was standing, it was ten feet away from me. The root end of the tree was resting on the hillside, which here went up steeply and was overgrown with brushwood, and the branch end (which had been snapped off when the tree had fallen) was projecting out over the hillside. Beyond the tree the hill appeared to be more or less perpendicular, and running across the face of it was a narrow ledge of rock, which disappeared into dense jungle thirty yards further on.

If my surmise, that the sun had been the cause of the tiger changing his position, was correct, there was no more suitable place than the lee of the tree for him to have taken shelter in, and the only way of satisfying myself on this point was, to walk up to the tree— and look over. Here a picture

seen long years ago in Punch flashed into memory. The picture was of a lone sportsman who had gone out to hunt lions and who on glancing up, on to the rock he was passing, looked straight into the grinning face of the most enormous lion in Africa. Underneath the picture was written, 'When you go out looking for a lion, be quite sure that you want to see him'. True, there would be this small difference, that whereas my friend in Africa looked up— into the lion's face, I would look down— into the tiger's; otherwise the two cases— assuming that the tiger was on the far side of the tree— would be very similar.

Slipping my feet forward an inch at a time on the soft grass, I now started to approach the tree, and had covered about half the distance that separated me from it when I caught sight of a black-and-yellow object about three inches long on the rocky ledge, which I now saw was a well-used game path. For a long minute I stared at this motionless object, until I was convinced that it was the tip of the tiger's tail. If the tail was pointing away from me the head must obviously be towards me, and as the ledge was only some two feet wide, the tiger could only be crouching down and waiting to spring the moment my head appeared over the bole of the tree. The tip of the tail was twenty feet from me, and allowing eight feet for the tiger's length while crouching, his head would be twelve feet away. But I should have to approach much nearer before I should be able to see enough of his body to get in a crippling shot, and a crippling shot it would have to be if I wanted to leave on my feet. And now, for the first time in my life, I regretted my habit of carrying an uncocked rifle. The safety-catch of my 450/400 makes a very distinct click when thrown off, and to make any sound now would either bring the tiger right on top of me, or send him straight down the steep hillside without any possibility of my getting in a shot.

Inch by inch I again started to creep forward, until the whole of the tail, and after it the hind quarters, came into view. When I saw the hind quarters, I could have shouted with delight, for they showed that the tiger was not crouching and ready to spring, but was lying down. As there was only room for his body on the two-foot-wide ledge, he had stretched his hind legs out and was resting them on the upper branches of an oak sapling growing up

the face of the almost perpendicular hillside. Another foot forward and his belly came into view, and from the regular way in which it was heaving up and down I knew that he was asleep. Less slowly now I moved forward, until his shoulder, and then his whole length, was exposed to my view. The back of his head was resting on the edge of the grass plot, which extended for three or four feet beyond the fallen tree; his eyes were fast shut, and his nose was pointing to heaven.

Aligning the sights of the rifle on his forehead I pressed the trigger and, while maintaining a steady pressure on it, pushed up the safety-catch. I had no idea how this reversal of the usual method of discharging a rifle would work, but it did work; and when the heavy bullet at that short range crashed into his forehead not so much as a quiver went through his body. His tail remained stretched straight out; his hind legs continued to rest on the upper branches of the sapling; and his nose still pointed to heaven. Nor did his position change in the slightest when I sent a second, and quite unnecessary, bullet to follow the first. The only change noticeable was that his stomach had stopped heaving up and down, and that blood was trickling down his forehead from two surprisingly small holes.

I do not know how the close proximity of a tiger reacts on others, but me it always leaves with a breathless feeling— due possibly as much to fear as to excitement— and a desire for a little rest. I sat down on the fallen tree and lit the cigarette I had denied myself from the day my throat had got bad, and allowed my thoughts to wander. Any task well accomplished gives satisfaction, and the one just completed was no exception. The reason for my presence at that spot was the destruction of the man-eater, and from the time I had left the road two hours previously right up to the moment I pushed up the safety-catch everything— including the *langur* call— had worked smoothly and without a single fault. In this there was great satisfaction, the kind of satisfaction I imagine an author must feel when he writes FINIS to the plot that, stage by stage, has unfolded itself just as he desired it to. In my case, however, the finish had not been satisfactory, for I had killed the animal, that was lying five feet from me, in his sleep.

My personal feelings in the matter are I know of little interest to others, but it occurs to me that possibly you also might think it was not cricket, and in that case I should like to put the arguments before you that I used on myself, in the hope that you will find them more satisfactory than I did. These arguments were (a) The tiger was a man-eater that was better dead than alive, (b) therefore it made no difference whether he was awake or asleep when killed, and (c) that had I walked away when I saw his belly heaving up and down I should have been morally responsible for the deaths of all the human beings he killed thereafter. All good and sound arguments, you will admit, for my having acted as I did; but the regret remains that through fear of the consequences to myself, or fear of losing the only chance I might ever get, or possibly a combination of the two, I did not awaken the sleeping animal and give him a sporting chance.

The tiger was dead, and if my trophy was to be saved from falling into the valley below and ruined, it was advisable to get him off the ledge with as little delay as possible. Leaning the rifle, for which I had no further use, against the fallen tree, I climbed up to the road and, once round the corner near the cultivated land, I cupped my hands and sent a cooeo echoing over the hills and valleys. I had no occasion to repeat the call, for my men had heard my two shots when returning from attending to the first buffalo and had run back to the hut to collect as many villagers as were within calling distance. Now, on hearing my cooeo, the whole crowd came helter-skelter down the road to meet me.

When stout ropes and an axe had been procured I took the crowd back with me, and after I had secured the ropes round the tiger, willing hands half carried and half dragged him off the ledge and over the fallen tree, on to the plot of grass. Here I would have skinned him, but the villagers begged me not to do so, saying that the women and children of Kartkanoula and the adjoining villages would be very disappointed if they were not given an opportunity of seeing the tiger with their own eyes and satisfying themselves that the man-eater, in fear of whom they had lived for so many years, and who had established a reign of terror over the whole district, was really and truly dead.



While a couple of saplings to assist in carrying the tiger back to the hut were being felled, I saw some of the men passing their hands over the tiger's limbs, and knew they were satisfying themselves that their assertion that the tiger had not been suffering from any old, or crippling, wounds was correct. At the hut the tiger was placed in the shade of a wide-spreading tree and the villagers informed that it was at their disposal up to two o'clock—longer I could not give them, for it was a very hot day and there was fear of the hair slipping, and the skin being ruined.

I myself had not looked closely at the tiger, but at 2 p.m., when I laid him on his back to start the skinning, I noticed that most of the hair from the inner side of his left foreleg was missing, and that there were a number of small punctures in the skin, from which yellow fluid was exuding. I did not draw attention to these punctures, and left the skinning of the leg, which was considerably thinner than the right leg, to the last. When the skin had been removed from the rest of the animal, I made a long cut from the chest to the pad of the festering left leg, and as I removed the skin, drew out of the flesh, one after another, porcupine quills which the men standing round eagerly seized as souvenirs; the longest of these quills was about five inches, and their total number was between twenty-five and thirty. The flesh under the skin, from the tiger's chest to the pad of his foot, was soapy, and of a dark yellow colour; cause enough to have made the poor beast moan when he walked, and quite sufficient reason for his having become—and having remained—a man-eater, for porcupine quills do not dissolve no matter how long they are embedded in flesh.

I have extracted, possibly, a couple of hundred porcupine quills from the man-eating tigers I have shot. Many of these quills have been over nine inches in length and as thick as pencils. The majority were embedded in hard muscles, a few were wedged firmly between bones, and all were broken off short under the skin.

Unquestionably the tigers acquired the quills when killing porcupines for food, but the question arises—to which I regret I am unable to give any satisfactory answer—why animals with the intelligence, and the agility, of tigers, should have been so careless as to drive quills deep into themselves,



or be so slow in their movements as to permit porcupines— whose only method of defending themselves is by walking backwards— to do so; and further, why the quills should have been broken off short, for porcupine quills are not brittle.

Leopards are just as partial to porcupines as our hill tigers are, but they do not get quills stuck in them, for they kill porcupines— as I have seen— by catching them by the head; and why tigers do not employ the same safe and obvious method of killing as leopards employ, and so avoid injury to themselves is a mystery to me.

And now I have done telling you the story of the second of the three man-eating tigers mentioned at that District Conference of long ago and, when opportunity offers, I will tell you how the third tiger, the Kanda man-eater, died.





## *The Fish of My Dreams*

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FISHING for *mahseer* in a well-stocked submontane river is, in my opinion, the most fascinating of all field sports. Our environments, even though we may not be continuously conscious of them, nevertheless play a very important part in the sum total of our enjoyment of any form of outdoor sport. I am convinced that the killing of the fish of one's dreams in uncongenial surroundings would afford an angler as little pleasure as the winning of the Davis Cup would to a tennis player if the contest were staged in the Sahara.

The river I have recently been fishing in flows, for some forty miles of its length, through a beautifully wooded valley, well stocked with game and teeming with bird life. I had the curiosity to count the various kinds of animals and birds seen in one day, and by the evening of that day my count showed, among animals, sambur, chital, kakar, ghooral, pig, *langur* and red monkeys; and among birds seventy-five varieties including peafowl, red jungle fowl, kaleege pheasants, black partridge and bush quail.

In addition to these I saw a school of five otter in the river, several small mugger and a python. The python was lying on the surface of a big still

pool, with only the top of its flat head and eyes projecting above the gin-clear water. The subject was one I had long wished to photograph, and in order to do this it was necessary to cross the river above the pool and climb the opposite hillside; but unfortunately I had been seen by those projecting eyes, and as I cautiously stepped backwards, the reptile, which appeared to be about eighteen feet long, submerged, to retire to its subterranean home among the piled-up boulders at the head of the pool.

In some places the valley through which the river flows is so narrow that a stone can be tossed with ease from one side to the other, and in other places it widens out to a mile or more. In these open spaces grow amaltas with their two-feet-long sprays of golden bloom, karaunda and box bushes with their white star-shaped flowers. The combined scent from these flowers fills the air, throbbing with the spring songs of a multitude of birds, with the most delicate and pleasing of perfumes. In these surroundings angling for *mahseer* might well be described as sport fit for kings. My object in visiting this sportsman's paradise was not, however, to kill mahseer, but to try to secure a daylight picture of a tiger, and it was only when light conditions were unfavourable that I laid aside my movie camera for a rod.

I had been out from dawn one day, trying, hour after hour, to get a picture of a tigress and her two cubs. The tigress was a young animal, nervous as all young mothers are, and as often as I stalked her she retired with the cubs into heavy cover. There is a limit to the disturbance a tigress, be she young or old, will suffer when accompanied by cubs, and when the limit on this occasion had been reached I altered my tactics and tried sitting up in trees over open glades, and lying in high grass near a stagnant pool in which she and her family were accustomed to drink, but with no better success.

When the declining sun was beginning to cast shadows over the open places I was watching, I gave up the attempt, and added the day to the several hundred days I had already spent in trying to get a picture of a tiger in its natural surroundings. The two men I had brought from camp had passed the day in the shade of a tree on the far side of the river. I instructed them to return to camp by way of the forest track, and, exchanging my

camera for a rod, set off along the river, intent on catching a fish for my dinner.

The fashion in rods and tackle has altered, in recent years, as much as the fashion in ladies' dress. Gone, one often wonders where, are the 18-foot greenheart rods with their unbreakable accompaniments, and gone the muscles to wield them, and their place has been taken by light one-handed fly rods.

I was armed with an 11-foot tournament trout rod, a reel containing 50 yards of casting line and 200 yards of fine silk backing, a medium gut cast, and a one-inch home-made brass spoon.

When one has unlimited undisturbed water to fish one is apt to be over-critical. A pool is discarded because the approach to it is over rough ground, or a run is rejected because of a suspected snag. On this occasion, half a mile had been traversed before a final selection was made: a welter of white water cascading over rocks at the head of a deep oily run 80 yards long, and at the end of the run a deep still pool 200 yards long and 70 yards wide. Here was the place to catch the fish for my dinner.

Standing just clear of the white water I flicked the spoon into the run, pulling a few yards of line off the reel as I did so, and as I raised the rod to allow the line to run through the rings the spoon was taken by a fish, near the bank, and close to where I was standing. By great good luck the remaining portion of the slack line tightened on the drum of the reel and did not foul the butt of the rod or handle of the reel, as so often happens.

In a flash the fish was off downstream, the good well-oiled reel singing a paean of joy as the line was stripped off it. The 50 yards of casting line followed by 100 yards of backing were gone, leaving in their passage burned furrows in the fingers of my left hand, when all at once the mad rush ceased as abruptly as it had begun, and the line went dead.

The speculations one makes on these occasions chased each other through my mind, accompanied by a little strong language to ease my feelings. The hold had been good without question. The cast, made up a few

days previously from short lengths of gut procured from the Pilot Gut Coy., had been carefully tied and tested. Suspicion centred on the split ring: possibly, cracked on a stone on some previous occasion, it had now given way.

Sixty yards of the line are back on the reel, when the slack line is seen to curve to the left, and a moment later is cutting a strong furrow upstream—the fish is still on, and is heading for the white water. Established here, pulling alternately from upstream, at right angles, and downstream fails to dislodge him. Time drags on, and the conviction grows that the fish has gone, leaving the line hung up on a snag. Once again and just as hope is being abandoned the line goes slack, and then tightens a moment later, as the fish for the second time goes madly downstream.

And now he appears to have made up his mind to leave this reach of the river for the rapids below the pool. In one strong steady run he reaches the tail of the pool. Here, where the water fans out and shallows, he hesitates, and finally returns to the pool. A little later he shows on the surface for the first time, and but for the fact that the taut line runs direct from the point of the rod to the indistinctly seen object on the far side of the pool, it would be impossible to believe that the owner of that great triangular fin, projecting five inches out of the water, had taken a fly spoon a yard or two from my feet.

Back in the depths of the pool, he was drawn inch by inch into slack water. To land a big fish single-handed on a trout rod is not an easy accomplishment. Four times he was stranded with a portion of his great shoulders out of water, and four times at my very cautious approach he lashed out, and, returning to the pool, had to be fought back inch by inch. At the fifth attempt, with the butt of the rod held at the crook of my thumb and reversed, rings upwards to avoid the handle of the reel coming into contact with him, he permits me to place one hand and then the other against his sides and very gently propel him through the shallow water up on to dry land.

A fish I had set out to catch, and a fish I had caught, but he would take no part in my dinner that night, for between me and camp lay three and a half miles of rough ground, half of which would have to be covered in the dark.

When sending away my 11-lb. camera I had retained the cotton cord I use for drawing it up after me when I sit in trees. One end of this cord was passed through the gills of the fish and out at his mouth, and securely tied in a loop. The other end was made fast to the branch of a tree. When the cord was paid out the fish lay snugly against a great slab of rock, in comparatively still water. Otter were the only danger, and to scare them off I made a flag of my handkerchief, and fixed the end of the improvised flagstaff in the bed of the river a little below the fish.

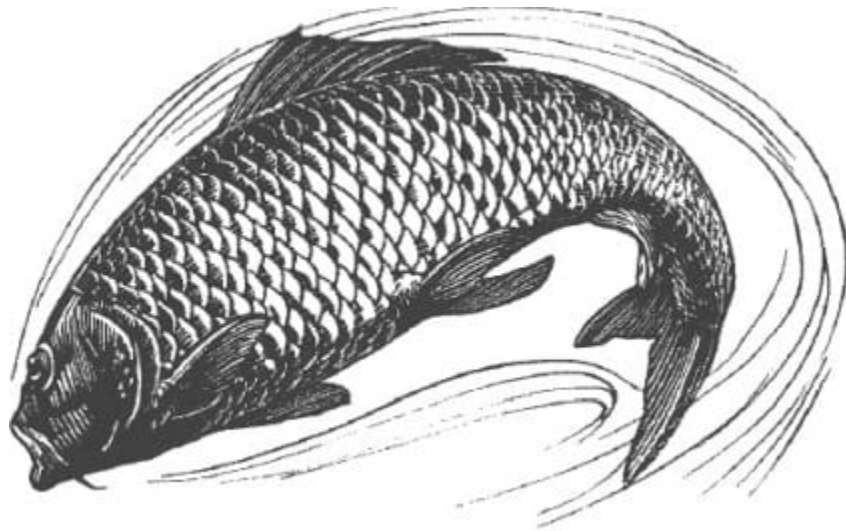
The sun was gilding the mountain tops next morning when I was back at the pool, and found the fish lying just where I had left it the previous evening. Having unfastened the cord from the branch, I wound it round my hand as I descended the slab of rock towards the fish. Alarmed at my approach, or feeling the vibration of the cord, the fish suddenly galvanized into life, and with a mighty splash dashed upstream. Caught at a disadvantage, I had no time to brace my feet on the sloping and slippery rock, but was jerked headlong into the pool.

I have a great distaste for going over my depth in these submontane rivers, for the thought of being encircled by a hungry python is very repugnant to me, and I am glad there were no witnesses to the manner in which I floundered out of that pool. I had just scrambled out on the far side, with the fish still attached to my right hand, when the men I had instructed to follow me arrived. Handing the fish over to them to take down to our camp on the bank of the river, I went on ahead to change and get my camera ready.

I had no means of weighing the fish and at a rough guess both the men and I put it at 50 lb.

The weight of the fish is immaterial, for weights are soon forgotten. Not so forgotten are the surroundings in which the sport is indulged in. The steel

blue of the fern-fringed pool where the water rests a little before cascading over rock and shingle to draw breath again in another pool more beautiful than the one just left— the flash of the gaily-coloured kingfisher as he breaks the surface of the water, shedding a shower of diamonds from his wings as he rises with a chirp of delight, a silver minnow held firmly in his vermilion bill— the belling of the sambur and the clear tuneful call of the chital apprising the jungle folk that the tiger, whose pug marks show wet on the sand where a few minutes before he crossed the river, is out in search of his dinner. These are things that will not be forgotten and will live in my memory, the lodestone to draw me back to that beautiful valley, as yet unspoiled by the hand of man.





## *The Kanda Man-Eater*

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**H**OWEVER little faith we have in the superstitions we share with others— thirteen at a table, the passing of wine at dinner, walking under a ladder, and so on— our own private superstitions, though a source of amusement to our friends, are very real to us.

I do not know if sportsmen are more superstitious than the rest of mankind, but I do know that they take their superstitions very seriously. One of my friends invariably takes five cartridges, never more and never less, when he goes out after big game, and another as invariably takes seven cartridges. Another, who incidentally was the best-known big-game sportsman in Northern India, never started the winter shooting season without first killing a mahseer. My own private superstition concerns snakes. When after man-eaters I have a deep rooted conviction that, however much I may try, all my efforts will be unavailing until I have first killed a snake.

During the hottest days of one May I had from dawn to dark climbed innumerable miles up and down incredibly steep hills, and through thick thorn bushes that had left my hands and knees a mass of ugly scratches, in search of a very wary man-eater. I returned on that fifteenth evening, dog-tired, to the two-roomed Forest Bungalow I was staying at to find a



deputation of villagers waiting for me with the very welcome news that the man-eater, a tiger, had been seen that day on the outskirts of their village. It was too late to do anything that night, so the deputation were provided with lanterns and sent home with strict injunctions that no one was to leave the village the following day.

The village was situated at the extreme end of the ridge on which the bungalow was, and because of its isolated position and the thick forest that surrounded it, had suffered more from the depredations of the tiger than any other village in the district. The most recent victims were two women and a man.

I had made one complete circle of the village the following morning and had done the greater part of a second circle, a quarter of a mile below the first, when after negotiating a difficult scree of shale I came on a little *nullah* made by the rush of rain-water down the steep hillside. A glance up and down the *nullah* satisfied me that the tiger was not in it, and then a movement just in front of me, and about twenty-five feet away, caught my eye. At this spot there was a small pool of water the size of a bath-tub, and on the far side of it was a snake that had evidently been drinking. The lifting of the snake's head had caught my eye and it was not until the head had been raised some two or three feet from the ground and the hood expanded that I realized it was a hamadryad. It was the most beautiful snake I had ever seen. The throat, as it faced me, was a deep orange red shading to golden yellow where the body met the ground. The back, olive green, was banded by ivory-coloured chevrons, and some four feet of its length from the tip of its tail upwards was shiny black, with white chevrons. In length the snake was between thirteen and fourteen feet.

One hears many tales about hamadryads, their aggressiveness when disturbed, and the speed at which they can travel. If, as it seemed about to do, the snake attacked, up or down hill I should be at a disadvantage, but across the shale scree I felt that I could hold my own. A shot at the expanded hood, the size of a small plate, would have ended the tension, but the rifle in my hands was a heavy one and I had no intention of disturbing the tiger that had showed up after so many days of weary waiting and toil.

After an interminably long minute, during which time the only movement was the flicking in and out of a long and quivering forked tongue, the snake closed his hood, lowered his head to the ground and, turning, made off up the opposite slope. Without taking my eyes off him I groped with my hand on the hillside and picked up a stone that filled my hand as comfortably as a cricket ball. The snake had just reached a sharp ridge of hard clay when the stone, launched with the utmost energy I was capable of, struck it on the back of the head. The blow would have killed any other snake outright but the only, and very alarming, effect it had on the hamadryad was to make it whip round and come straight towards me. A second and a larger stone fortunately caught it on the neck when it had covered half the distance between us, and after that the rest was easy. With a great feeling of satisfaction I completed the second circle round the village, and though it proved as fruitless as the first, I was elated at having killed the snake. Now, for the first time in many days, I had a feeling that my search for the man-eater would be successful.

The following day I again searched the forest surrounding the village, and towards evening found the fresh pug marks of the tiger at the edge of a ploughed field overlooking the village. The occupants of the village, numbering about a hundred, were by now thoroughly alarmed, and leaving them with the assurance that I would return early next day I set out on my lonely four-mile walk back to the Forest Bungalow.

To walk with safety through forests or along deserted roads in an area in which a man-eater is operating calls for the utmost caution and the strict observance of many rules. It is only when the hunter has repeatedly been the hunted that the senses can be attuned to the required pitch, and those rules be strictly adhered to, the breaking of which would provide the man-eater with an easy victim.

The reader may ask, 'Why a lonely walk?', when I probably had men and to spare with me in camp. My answer to this very natural question would be: first, because one is apt to get careless and rely too much on one's companions, and second, because in a mix-up with a tiger one has a better chance when one is alone.

The next morning, as I approached the village, I saw an eager throng of men waiting for me, and when within earshot I was greeted with the gratifying news that a buffalo had been killed during the night. The animal had been killed in the village, and after being dragged some distance along the ridge had been taken down into a narrow, deep, and very heavily wooded valley on the north face of the hill.

A very careful reconnaissance from a projecting rock on the ridge satisfied me that an approach down the steep hill, along the line of the drag, would not be advisable, and that the only thing to do was to make a wide detour, enter the valley from the lower end and work up to the spot where I expected to find the kill.

This manoeuvre was successfully accomplished, and by midday I had arrived at the spot—marked from above—where the valley flattened out for a hundred yards before going straight up three hundred yards to the ridge above. It was at the upper end of this flat bit of ground that I expected to find the kill, and with luck, the tiger. The long and difficult climb up the valley through dense thickets of thorn bush and stunted bamboo had brought out a bath of sweat, and as it was not advisable to take on a job where quick firing might be necessary with sweaty hands, I sat down for a much-needed rest and for a smoke.

The ground in front of me was strewn with large smooth boulders among which a tiny stream meandered, forming wherever possible small crystal-clear pools. Shod with the thinnest of rubber-soled shoes, the going over these boulders was ideal for my purpose, and when I had cooled and dried I set off to stalk the kill in the hope of finding the tiger lying asleep near it. When three-quarters of the ground had been covered I caught sight of the kill tucked away under a bank of ferns, and about twenty-five yards away from where the hill went steeply up to the ridge. The tiger was not in sight, and, very cautiously drawing level with the kill I took up my position on a flat boulder to scan every inch of ground visible.

The premonition of impending danger is too well known and established a fact to need any comment. For three or four minutes I had stood perfectly

still with no thought of danger and then all at once I became aware that the tiger was looking at me at a very short range. The same sense that had conveyed the feeling of impending danger to me had evidently operated in the same way on the tiger and awakened him from his sleep. To my left front were some dense bushes, growing on a bit of flat ground. On these bushes, distant fifteen to twenty feet from me, and about the same distance from the kill, my interest centred. Presently the bushes were gently stirred and the next second I caught sight of the tiger going at full speed up the steep hillside. Before I could get the rifle to bear on him he disappeared behind a creeper-covered tree, and it was not until he had covered about sixty yards that I again saw him, as he was springing up the face of a rock. At my shot he fell backwards and came roaring down the hill, bringing an avalanche of stones with him. A broken back, I concluded; and just as I was wondering how best to deal with him when he should arrive all-of-a-heap at my feet, the roaring ceased, and the next minute, as much to my relief as to my disappointment, I saw him going fullout, and apparently unwounded, across the side of the hill. The momentary glimpses I caught of him offered no shot worth taking, and with a crash through some dry bamboos he disappeared round the shoulder of the hill into the next valley.

I subsequently found that my bullet, fired at an angle of seventy-five degrees, had hit the tiger on the left elbow and chipped out a section from that bone which some cynical humourist has named the 'funny bone'. Carrying on, the bullet had struck the rock and, splashing back, had delivered a smashing blow on the point of the jaw. Neither wound, however painful it may have been, was fatal, and the only result of my following up the very light blood trail into the next valley was to be growled at from a dense thorn thicket, to enter which would have been suicidal.

My shot had been heard in the village and an expectant crowd were waiting for me on the ridge. They were even more disappointed, if that were possible, than I was at the failure of my carefully planned and as carefully executed stalk.

On visiting the kill the following morning I was very pleased and not a little surprised to find that the tiger had returned to it during the night and

taken a light meal. The only way now of getting a second shot was to sit up over the kill; and here a difficulty presented itself. There were no suitable trees within convenient distance of the kill, and the very unpleasant experience I had had on a former occasion had effectively cured me of sitting at night on the ground for a man-eater. While still undecided where to sit I heard the tiger call, some distance down the valley up which I had climbed the previous day. The calling of the tiger offered me a very welcome chance of shooting it in the most pleasant way it is possible of bringing one of these animals to bag. The conditions under which a tiger can be called up are (a) when rampaging through the forest in search of a mate, and (b) when lightly wounded. It goes without saying that the sportsman must be able to call sufficiently well to deceive the tiger, and that the call must come from a spot to which the tiger will quite naturally come — a dense thicket, or a patch of heavy grass— and that the sportsman must be prepared to take his shot at a very close range. I am quite certain that many sportsmen will be sceptical of the statement I have made that a lightly wounded tiger will come to a call. I would ask all such to reserve their judgement until they have tried to experiment for themselves. On the present occasion, however, though the tiger answered me, call for call, for upwards of an hour, he refused to come any nearer, and I attributed my failure to the fact that I was calling from the spot where the previous day the tiger had met with an unfortunate experience.

The tree I finally selected was growing on the very edge of a perpendicular bank and had a convenient branch about eight feet from the ground. When sitting on this branch I should be thirty feet from, and directly above, the boulder-strewn ravine up which I expected the tiger to come. The question of the tree settled, I returned to the ridge where I had instructed my men to meet me with breakfast.

By four o'clock in the evening I was comfortably seated on the branch and prepared for a long and a hard sit-up. Before leaving my men I had instructed them to cooe to me from the ridge at sunrise next morning. If I answered with the call of a leopard they were to sit tight, but if they received no answer, they were to form two parties with as many villagers as

they could collect and come down on either side of the valley, shouting and throwing stones.

I have acquired the habit of sleeping in any position on a tree, and as I was tired the evening did not pass unpleasantly. As the setting sun was gilding the hilltops above me I was roused to full consciousness by the alarm-call of a langur. I soon located the monkey, sitting in a tree-top on the far side of the valley, and as it was looking in my direction I concluded it had mistaken me for a leopard. The alarm-call was repeated at short intervals, and finally ceased as darkness came on.

Hour after hour I strained my eyes and ears, and was suddenly startled by a stone rolling down the hillside and striking my tree. The stone was followed by the stealthy padding of a heavy, soft-footed animal, unmistakably the tiger. At first I comforted myself with the thought that his coming in this direction, instead of up the valley, was accidental, but this thought was soon dispelled when he started to emit low deep growls from immediately behind me. Quite evidently he had come into the valley while I was having breakfast, and, taking up a position on the hill, where the monkey had later seen him, had watched me climbing into the tree. Here was a situation I had not counted on and one that needed careful handling. The branch that had provided a comfortable seat while daylight lasted, admitted of little change of position in the dark. I could, of course, have fired off my rifle into the air, but the terrible results I have seen following an attempt to drive away a tiger at very close quarters by discharging a gun dissuaded me from taking this action. Further, even if the tiger had not attacked, the discharge of the rifle (a 450/400) so near him would probably have made him leave the locality and all my toil would have gone for nothing.

I knew the tiger would not spring for that would have carried him straight down a drop of thirty feet on to the rocks below. But there was no need for him to spring, for by standing on his hind legs he could easily reach me. Lifting the rifle off my lap and reversing it, I pushed the barrel between my left arm and side, depressing the muzzle and slipping up the safety-catch as I did so. This movement was greeted by a deeper growl than any that had

preceded it. If the tiger now reached up for me he would in all probability come in contact with the rifle, round the triggers, of which my fingers were crooked, and even if I failed to kill him the confusion following on my shot would give me a sporting chance of climbing higher into the tree. Time dragged by on leaden feet, and, eventually, tiring of prowling about the hillside and growling, the tiger sprang across a little ravine on my left and a few minutes later I heard the welcome sound of a bone being cracked at the kill. At last I was able to relax in my uncomfortable position and the only sounds I heard for the rest of the night came from the direction of the kill.

The sun had been up but a few minutes and the valley was still in deep shadow when my men cooed from the ridge, and almost immediately afterwards I caught sight of the tiger making off at a fast canter up, and across, the hill on my left. In the uncertain light and with my nightlong-strained eyes the shot was a very difficult one, but I took it, and had the satisfaction of seeing the bullet going home. Turning with a great roar, he came straight for my tree, and as he was in the act of springing the second bullet, with great good fortune, crashed into his chest. Diverted in his spring by the impact of the heavy bullet, the tiger struck the tree just short of me, and ricochetting off it went headlong into the valley below, where his fall was broken by one of the small pools already alluded to. He floundered out of the water, leaving it dyed red with his blood, and went lumbering down the valley and out of sight.

Fifteen hours on the hard branch had cramped every muscle in my body, and it was not until I had swarmed down the tree, staining my clothes in the great gouts of blood the tiger had left on it, and had massaged my stiff limbs, that I was able to follow him. He had gone but a short distance, and I found him lying dead at the foot of a rock in another pool of water.





Contrary to my orders the men, collected on the ridge, hearing my shot and the tiger's roar followed by a second shot, came in a body down the hill. Arrived at the bloodstained tree, at the foot of which my soft hat was lying, they not unnaturally concluded I had been carried off by the tiger. Hearing their shouts of alarm I called out to them, and again they came running down the valley, only to be brought up with a gasp of dismay when they saw my blood-stained clothes. Reassured that I was not injured and that the blood on my clothes was not mine, a moment later they were crowding round the tiger. A stout sapling was soon cut and lashed to him with creepers, and the tiger, with -no little difficulty and a great deal of shouting, was carried up the steep hill to the village.

In remote areas in which long-established man-eaters are operating, many gallant acts of heroism are performed, which the local inhabitants accept as everyday occurrences and the outside world have no means of hearing about. I should like to put on record one such act concerning the Kanda man-eater's last human victim. I arrived on the scene shortly after the occurrence, and from details supplied by the villagers and from a careful examination of the ground, which had not been disturbed in the interval, I am able to present you with a story which I believe to be correct in every detail.

COPY OF PETITION BY THE PEOPLE OF GARHWAL\*

From

The Public of patty Painaun, Bungi and Bickla Badalpur  
District Garhwal

To

Captain J. E. Carbitt, Esq., I.A.R.O., Kaladhungi  
Distt. Naini Tal

Respected Sir

We all the public (of the above 3 Patties) most humbly and respectfully beg to lay the following few lines for favour of your kind consideration and doing needful.

That in this vicinity a tiger has turned out man-eater since December last. Up to this date he has killed 5 men and wounded 2. So we the public are in a great distress. By the fear of this tiger we cannot watch our wheat crop at night so the deers have nearly ruined it. We cannot go in the forest for fodder grass nor we can enter our castles in the forest to graze so many of our cattle are to die. Under the circumstances we are nearly to be ruined. The Forest officials are doing every possible arrangement to kill this tiger but there is no hope of any success. 2 *shikari* gentlemen also tried to shoot it but unfortunately they could not get it. Our kind District Magistrate has notified Rs. 150 reward for killing this tiger, so every one is trying to kill it but no success. We have heard that your kind self have killed many man-eating tigers and leopards. For this you have earned a good name specially in Kumaon revenue Division. The famous man-eater leopard of Nagpur has been shoot by you. This is the voice of all the public here that this tiger also will be killed only by you. So we the public venture to request that you very kindly take trouble to come to this place and shoot this tiger (our enemy) and save the public from this calamity. For this act of kindness we the public will be highly obliged and will pray for your long life and prosperity. Hope you will surely consider on our condition and take trouble to come here for saving to from this calamity. The route to this place is as follows Ramnagar to Sultan, Sultan to Lahachaur, Lahachaur to Kanda. If your honour kindly inform us the date of your arrival at Ramnagar we will send our men and cart to Ramnagar to meet you and accompany you.

We beg to remain Sir  
Your most sincerely  
*Signed* Govind Singh Negi  
Headman Village Jhara

Dated Jharat  
The 18th February 1933

*followed by 40 signatures and 4 thumb impressions of inhabitantsof  
Painaun, Bungi, and Bickla Badalpur Patties.*

Address

The Govind Singh Negi  
Village Jharat Patty Painaun,  
P.O. Badialgaon Distt., Garhwal, U.P.

(\*The promise mentioned on the previous page was made after receiving this petition)

In the village near which I shot the Kanda man-eater lived an elderly man and his only son. The father had served in the army during the 1914-18 war and it was his ambition to get his son enlisted in the Royal Garhwal Rifles — not as simple a job in the ‘piping days of peace’, when vacancies were few and applicants many, as it is today. Shortly after the lad’s eighteenth birthday a party of men passed through the village on their way to the bazaar at Lansdowne. The lad joined this party and immediately on arrival at Lansdowne presented himself at the Recruiting Office. As his father had taught him to salute with military precision and how to conduct himself in the presence of a Recruiting Officer, he was accepted without any hesitation, and, after enrolment, was given leave to deposit his few personal possessions at home before starting his army training.

He arrived back home at about midday, after an absence of five days, and was told by the friends who thronged round him to hear his news that his father was away ploughing their small holding at the extreme end of the village and would not return before nightfall. (The field that was being ploughed was the same one on which I had seen the pug marks of the man-eater the day I killed the hamadryad.)

One of the lad’s jobs had been to provide fodder for their cattle, and after he had partaken of the midday meal in a neighbour’s house he set out with a party of twenty men to collect leaves.

The village, as I have told you, is situated on a ridge, and is surrounded by forests. Two women had already been killed by the man-eater while cutting grass in these forests, and for several months the cattle had been kept alive on leaves cut from the trees surrounding the village. Each day the

men had to go further afield to get their requirements, and on this particular day the party of twenty-one, after crossing the cultivated land, went for a quarter of a mile down a very steep rocky hill to the head of the valley which runs east for eight miles, through dense forest, to where it meets the Ramganga river opposite the Dhikala Forest Bungalow.

Went headlong into the valley below: Illustrated by Neville Dear from the 1985 Reader Digest book of condensed stories Great Stories of Men and the Animal World

At the head of the valley the ground is more or less flat and overgrown with big trees. Here the men separated, each climbing into a tree of his choice, and after cutting the quantity of leaves required they tied them into bundles with rope brought for the purpose, and returned to the village in twos and threes.

Either when the party of men were coming down the hill, talking at the tops of their voices to keep up their courage and scare away the man-eater, or when they were on the trees shouting to each other, the tiger, who was lying up in a dense patch of cover half a mile down the valley, heard them. Leaving the cover, in which it had four days previously killed and eaten a sambur hind, the tiger crossed a stream and by way of a cattle track that runs the entire length of the valley hurried up in the direction of the men. (The speed at which a tiger has travelled over any ground on which he has left signs of his passage can be easily determined from the relative position of his fore and hind pug marks.)

The lad of my story had selected a Bauhinea tree from which to cut leaves for his cattle. This tree was about twenty yards above the cattle track, and the upper branches were leaning out over a small ravine in which there were two rocks. From a bend in the cattle track the tiger saw the lad on the tree, and after lying down and watching him for some time it left the track and concealed itself behind a fallen silk cotton tree some thirty yards from the ravine. When the lad had cut all the leaves he needed he descended from the tree and collected them in a heap, preparatory to tying them into a bundle. While doing this on the open flat ground he was comparatively

safe, but unfortunately he had noticed that two of the branches he had cut had fallen into the ravine between the two big rocks, and he sealed his fate by stepping down into the ravine to recover them. As soon as he was out of sight the tiger left the shelter of the fallen tree and crept forward to the edge of the ravine, and as the lad was stooping down to pick up the branches, it sprang on him and killed him. Whether the killing took place while the other men were still on the trees, or after they had left, it was not possible for me to determine.

The father of the lad returned to the village at sunset and was greeted with the very gratifying news that his son had been accepted for the army, and that he had returned from Lansdowne on short leave. Asking where the lad was, he was told that he had gone out earlier in the day to get fodder, and surprise was expressed that the father had not found him at home. After bedding down the bullocks the father went from house to house to find his son. All the men who had been out that day were questioned in turn, and all had the same tale to tell— that they had separated at the head of the valley, and no one could remember having seen the lad after that.

Crossing the terraced cultivated land the father went to the edge of the steep hill, and called, and called again, to his son, but received no answer.

Night was by now setting in. The man returned to his home and lit a small smoke-dimmed lantern, and as he passed through the village he horrified his neighbours by telling them, in reply to their questions, that he was going to look for his son. He was asked if he had forgotten the man-eater and answered that it was because of the man-eater that he was so anxious to find his son, for it was possible he had fallen off a tree and injured himself and, for fear of attracting the man-eater, had not answered to his call.

He did not ask anyone to accompany him, and no one offered to do so, and for the whole of that night he searched up and down that valley in which no one had dared to set foot since the advent of the man-eater. Four times during the night— as I saw from his foot-prints— when going along

the cattle track he had passed within ten feet of where the tiger was lying eating his son.

Weary and heartsick he climbed a little way up the rocky hill as light was coming, and sat down for a rest. From this raised position he could see into the ravine. At sunrise he saw a glint of blood on the two big rocks, and hurrying down to the spot he found all that the tiger had left of his son. These remains he collected and took back to his home, and when a suitable shroud had been procured, his friends helped him to carry the remains to the burning ghat on the banks of the Mandal river.

I do not think it would be correct to assume that acts such as these are performed by individuals who lack imagination and who therefore do not realize the grave risks they run. The people of our hills, in addition to being very sensitive to their environments, are very superstitious, and every hill-top, valley, and gorge is credited with possessing a spirit in one form or another, all of the evil and malignant kind most to be feared during the hours of darkness. A man brought up in these surroundings, and menaced for over a year by a man-eater, who, unarmed and alone, from sunset to sunrise, could walk through dense forests which his imagination peopled with evil spirits, and in which he had every reason to believe a man-eater was lurking, was in my opinion possessed of a quality and a degree of courage that is given to few. All the more do I give him credit for his act of heroism for not being conscious that he had done anything unusual, or worthy of notice. When at my request he sat down near the man-eater to enable me to take a photograph, he looked up at me and said, in a quiet and collected voice, 'I am content now, sahib, for you have avenged my son.'

This was the last of the three man-eaters that I had promised the District Officials of Kumaon, and later the people of Garhwal, that I would do my best to rid them of.





## *The Pipal Pani Tiger*

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**B**EYOND the fact that he was born in a ravine running deep into the foot-hills and was one of a family of three, I know nothing of his early history.

He was about a year old when, attracted by the calling of a chital hind early one November morning, I found his pug marks in the sandy bed of a little stream known locally as Pipal Pani. I thought at first that he had strayed from his mother's care, but, as week succeeded week and his single tracks showed on the game paths of the forest, I came to the conclusion that the near approach of the breeding season was an all-sufficient reason for his being alone. Jealously guarded one day, protected at the cost of the parent life if necessary, and set adrift the next, is the lot of all jungle folk; nature's method of preventing inbreeding.

That winter he lived on peafowl, kakar, small pig and an occasional chital hind, making his home in a prostrate giant of the forest felled for no apparent reason, and hollowed out by time and porcupines. Here he brought



most of his kills, basking, when the days were cold, on the smooth bole of the tree, where many a leopard had basked before him.

It was not until January was well advanced that I saw the cub at close quarters. I was out one evening without any definite object in view, when I saw a crow rise from the ground and wipe its beak as it lit on the branch of a tree. Crows, vultures and magpies always interest me in the jungle, and many are the kills I have found both in India and in Africa with the help of these birds. On the present occasion the crow led me to the scene of an overnight tragedy. A chital had been killed and partly eaten and, attracted to the spot probably as I had been, a party of men passing along the road, distant some fifty yards, had cut up and removed the remains. All that was left of the chital were a few splinters of bone and a little congealed blood off which the crow had lately made his meal. The absence of thick cover and the proximity of the road convinced me that the animal responsible for the kill had not witnessed the removal and that it would return in due course; so I decided to sit up, and made myself as comfortable in a plum tree as the thorns permitted.

I make no apology to you, my reader, if you differ with me on the ethics of the much-debated subject of sitting up over kills. Some of my most pleasant *shikar* memories centre round the hour or two before sunset that I have spent in a tree over a natural kill, ranging from the time when, armed with a muzzle-loader whipped round with brass wire to prevent the cracked barrel from bursting, I sat over a *langur* killed by a leopard, to a few days ago, when with the most modern rifle across my knees, I watched a tigress and her two full-grown cubs eat up the sambur stag they had killed, and counted myself no poorer for not having secured a trophy.

True, on the present occasion there is no kill below me, but, for the reasons given, that will not affect any chance of a shot; scent to interest the jungle folk there is in plenty in the bloodsoaked ground, as witness the old grey-whiskered boar who has been quietly rooting along for the past ten minutes, and who suddenly stiffens to attention as he comes into the line of the blood-tainted wind. His snout held high, and worked as only a pig can work that member, tells him more than I was able to glean from the ground

which showed no tracks; his method of approach, a short excursion to the right and back into the wind, and then a short excursion to the left and again back into the wind, each manoeuvre bringing him a few yards nearer, indicates the chital was killed by a tiger. Making sure once and again that nothing worth eating has been left, he finally trots off and disappears from view.

Two chital, both with horns in velvet, now appear and from the fact that they are coming down-wind, and making straight for the blood-soaked spot, it is evident they were witnesses to the overnight tragedy. Alternately snuffing the ground, or standing rigid with every muscle tensed for instant flight, they satisfy their curiosity and return the way they came.

Curiosity is not a human monopoly; many an animal's life is cut short by indulging in it. A dog leaves the verandah, to bark at a shadow, a deer leaves the herd to investigate a tuft of grass that no wind agitated, and the waiting leopard is provided with a meal.

The sun is nearing the winter line when a movement to the right front attracts attention. An animal has crossed an opening between two bushes at the far end of a wedge of scrub that terminates thirty yards from my tree. Presently the bushes at my end part, and out into the open, with never a look to right or left, steps the cub. Straight up to the spot where his kill had been he goes, his look of expectancy giving place to one of disappointment as he realizes that his chital, killed, possibly, after hours of patient stalking, is gone. The splinters of bone and congealed blood are rejected, and his interest centres on a tree stump lately used as a butcher's block, to which some shreds of flesh are adhering. I was not the only one who carried fire-arms in these jungles and, if the cub was to grow into a tiger, it was necessary he should be taught the danger of carelessly approaching kills in daylight. A scatter-gun and dust-shot would have served my purpose better, but the rifle will have to do this time; and, as he raises his head to smell the stump, my bullet crashes into the hard wood an inch from his nose. Only once in the years that followed did the cub forget that lesson.



The following winter I saw him several times. His ears did not look so big now and he had changed his baby hair for a coat of rich tawny red with well-defined stripes. The hollow tree had been given up to its rightful owners a pair of leopards, new quarters found in a thick belt of scrub skirting the foot-hills, and young sambur added to his menu.

On my annual descent from the hills next winter, the familiar pug marks no longer showed on the game paths and at the drinking places, and for several weeks I thought the cub had abandoned his old haunts and gone further afield. Then one morning his absence was explained for, side by side with his tracks, were the smaller and more elongated tracks of the mate he had gone to find. I only once saw the tigers, for the cub was a tiger now, together. I had been out before dawn to try to bag a serow that lived on the foot-hills, and returning along a fire track my attention was arrested by a vulture, perched on the dead limb of a sal tree.

The bird had his back towards me and was facing a short stretch of scrub with dense jungle beyond. Dew was still heavy on the ground, and without a sound I reached the tree and peered round. One antler of a dead sambur, for no living deer would lie in that position, projected above the low bushes. A convenient moss-covered rock afforded my rubbershod feet silent and safe hold, and as I drew myself erect, the sambur came into full view. The hind quarters had been eaten away and, lying on either side of the kill, were the pair, the tiger being on the far side with only his hind legs showing. Both tigers were asleep. Ten feet straight in front, to avoid a dead branch, and thirty feet to the left would give me a shot at the tiger's neck, but in planning the stalk I had forgotten the silent spectator. Where I stood I was invisible to him, but before the ten feet had been covered I came into view and, alarmed at my near proximity, he flapped off his perch, omitting as he did so to notice a thin creeper dependent from a branch above him against which he collided, and came ignominiously to ground. The tigress was up and away in an instant, clearing at a bound the kill and her mate, the tiger not being slow to follow; a possible shot, but too risky with thick jungle ahead where a wounded animal would have all the advantages. To those who have never tried it, I can recommend the stalking of leopards and tigers on their kills as a most pleasant form of sport. Great care should however be

taken over the shot, for if the animal is not killed outright, or anchored, trouble is bound to follow.

A week later the tiger resumed his bachelor existence. A change had now come over his nature. Hitherto he had not objected to my visiting his kills but, after his mate left, at the first drag I followed up I was given very clearly to understand that no liberties would in future be permitted. The angry growl of a tiger at close quarters, than which there is no more terrifying sound in the jungles, has to be heard to be appreciated.

Early in March the tiger killed his first full-grown buffalo. I was near the foot-hills one evening when the agonized bellowing of a buffalo, mingled with the angry roar of a tiger, rang through the forest. I located the sound as coming from a ravine about six hundred yards away. The going was bad, mostly over loose rocks and through thorn bushes, and when I crawled up a steep bluff commanding a view of the ravine the buffalo's struggles were over, and the tiger nowhere to be seen. For an hour I lay with finger on trigger without seeing anything of the tiger. At dawn next morning I again crawled up the bluff, to find the buffalo lying just as I had left her. The soft ground, torn up by hoof and claw, testified to the desperate nature of the struggle and it was not until the buffalo had been hamstrung that the tiger had finally succeeded in pulling her down, in a fight which had lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. The tiger's tracks led across the ravine and, on following them up, I found a long smear of blood on a rock, and, a hundred yards further on, another smear on a fallen tree. The wound inflicted by the buffalo's horns was in the tiger's head and sufficiently severe to make the tiger lose all interest in the kill, for he never returned to it.

Three years later the tiger, disregarding the lesson received when a cub (his excuse may have been that it was the close season for tigers), incautiously returned to a kill, over which a zamindar and some of his tenants were sitting at night, and received a bullet in the shoulder which fractured the bone. No attempt was made to follow him up, and thirty-six hours later, his shoulder covered with a swarm of flies, he limped through the compound of the Inspection Bungalow, crossed a bridge flanked on the far side by a double row of tenanted houses, the occupants of which stood at

their doors to watch him pass, entered the gate of a walled-in compound and took possession of a vacant godown. Twenty-four hours later, possibly alarmed by the number of people who had collected from neighbouring villages to see him, he left the compound the way he had entered it, passed our gate, and made his way to the lower end of our village. A bullock belonging to one of our tenants had died the previous night and had been dragged into some bushes at the edge of the village; this the tiger found, and here he remained a few days, quenching his thirst at an irrigation furrow.

When we came down from the hills two months later the tiger was living on small animals (calves, sheep, goats, etc.) that he was able to catch on the outskirts of the village. By March his wound had healed, leaving his right foot turned inwards. Returning to the forest where he had been wounded, he levied heavy toll on the village cattle, taking, for safety's sake, but one meal off each and in this way killing five times as many as he would ordinarily have done. The zamindar who had wounded him and who had a herd of some four hundred head of cows and buffaloes was the chief sufferer.

In the succeeding years he gained as much in size as in reputation, and many were the attempts made by sportsmen, and others, to bag him.

One November evening, a villager, armed with a single-barrel muzzle-loading gun, set out to try to bag a pig, selecting for his ground *machan* an isolated bush growing in a twenty-yard-wide rowkah (dry watercourse) running down the centre of some broken ground. This ground was rectangular, flanked on the long sides by cultivated land and on the short sides by a road, and by a ten-foot canal that formed the boundary between our cultivation and the forest. In front of the man was a four-foot-high bank with a cattle track running along the upper edge; behind him a patch of dense scrub. At 8 p.m. an animal appeared on the track and, taking what aim he could, he fired. On receiving the shot the animal fell off the bank, and passed within a few feet of the man, grunting as it entered the scrub behind. Casting aside his blanket, the man ran to his hut two hundred yards away. Neighbours soon collected and, on hearing the man's account, came to the conclusion that a pig had been hard hit. It would be a pity, they said, to leave the pig for hyenas and jackals to eat, so a lantern was lit and as a

party of six bold spirits set out to retrieve the bag, one of my tenants (who declined to join the expedition, and who confessed to me later that he had no stomach for looking for wounded pig in dense scrub in the dark) suggested that the gun should be loaded and taken.

His suggestion was accepted and, as a liberal charge of powder was being rammed home, the wooden ramrod jammed and broke inside the barrel. A trivial accident which undoubtedly saved the lives of six men. The broken rod was eventually and after great trouble extracted, the gun loaded, and the party set off.

Arrived at the spot where the animal had entered the bushes, a careful search was made and, on blood being found, every effort to find the 'pig' was made; it was not until the whole area had been combed out that the quest for that night was finally abandoned. Early next morning the search was resumed, with the addition of my informant of weak stomach, who was a better woodsman than his companions and who, examining the ground under a bush where there was a lot of blood, collected and brought some blood-stained hairs to me which I recognized as tiger's hairs, A brother sportsman was with me for the day and together we went to have a look at the ground.

The reconstruction of jungle events from signs on the ground has always held great interest for me. True, one's deductions are sometimes wrong, but they are also sometimes right. In the present instance I was right in placing the wound in the inner forearm of the right foreleg, but was wrong in assuming the leg had been broken and that the tiger was a young animal and a stranger to the locality.

There was no blood beyond the point where the hairs had been found and, as tracking on the hard ground was impossible, I crossed the canal to where the cattle track ran through a bed of sand. Here from the pug marks I found that the wounded animal was not a young tiger as I had assumed, but my old friend the Pipal Pani tiger who, when taking a short cut through the village, had in the dark been mistaken for a pig.

Once before when badly wounded he had passed through the settlement without harming man or beast, but he was older now, and if driven by pain and hunger might do considerable damage. A disconcerting prospect, for the locality was thickly populated, and I was due to leave within the week, to keep an engagement that could not be put off.

For three days I searched every bit of the jungle between the canal and the foot-hills, an area of about four square miles, without finding any trace of the tiger. On the fourth afternoon, as I was setting out to continue the search, I met an old woman and her son hurriedly leaving the jungle. From them I learnt that the tiger was calling near the foot-hills and that all the cattle in the jungle had stampeded. When out with a rifle I invariably go alone; it is safer in a mix-up, and one can get through the jungle more silently. However, I stretched a point on this occasion, and let the boy accompany me since he was very keen on showing me where he had heard the tiger.

Arrived at the foot-hills, the boy pointed to a dense bit of cover, bounded on the far side by the fire-track to which I have already referred, and on the near side by the Pipal Pani stream. Running parallel to and about a hundred yards from the stream was a shallow depression some twenty feet wide, more or less open on my side and fringed with bushes on the side nearer the stream. A well-used path crossed the depression at right angles. Twenty yards from the path, and on the open side of the depression, was a small tree. If the tiger came down the path he would in all likelihood stand for a shot on clearing the bushes. Here I decided to take my stand and, putting the boy into the tree with his feet on a level with my head and instructing him to signal with his toes if from his raised position he saw the tiger before I did, I put my back to the tree and called.

You, who have spent as many years in the jungle as I have, need no description of the call of a tigress in search of a mate, and to you less fortunate ones I can only say that the call, to acquire which necessitates close observation and the liberal use of throat salve, cannot be described in words.



To my great relief, for I had crawled through the jungle for three days with finger on trigger, I was immediately answered from a distance of about five hundred yards, and for half an hour thereafter— it may have been less and certainly appeared more— the call was tossed back and forth. On the one side the urgent summons of the king, and on the other, the subdued and coaxing answer of his handmaiden. Twice the boy signalled, but I had as yet seen nothing of the tiger, and it was not until the setting sun was flooding the forest with golden light that he suddenly appeared, coming down the path at a fast walk with never a pause as he cleared the bushes. When half-way across the depression, and just as I was raising the rifle, he turned to the right and came straight towards me.

This manoeuvre, unforeseen when selecting my stand, brought him nearer than I had intended he should come and, moreover, presented me with a head shot which at that short range I was not prepared to take. Resorting to an old device, learned long years ago and successfully used on similar occasions, the tiger was brought to a stand without being alarmed. With one paw poised, he slowly raised his head, exposing as he did so his chest and throat. After the impact of the heavy bullet, he struggled to his feet and tore blindly through the forest, coming down with a crash within a few yards of where, attracted by the calling of a chital hind one November morning, I had first seen his pug marks.

It was only then that I found he had been shot under a misapprehension, for the wound which I feared might make him dangerous proved on examination to be almost healed and caused by a pellet of lead having severed a small vein in his right forearm.

Pleasure at having secured a magnificent trophy— he measured 10' 3" over curves and his winter coat was in perfect condition— was not unmixed with regret, for never again would the jungle folk and I listen with held breath to his deep-throated call resounding through the foot-hills, and never again would his familiar pug marks show on the game paths that he and I had trodden for fifteen years.





## *The Thak Man-Eater*

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### I

PEACE had reigned in the Ladhya valley for many months when in September '38 a report was received in Naini Tal that a girl, twelve years of age, had been killed by a tiger at Kot Kindri village. The report which reached me through Donald Stewart of the Forest Department gave no details, and it was not until I visited the village some weeks later that I was able to get particulars of the tragedy. It appeared that, about noon one day, this girl was picking up windfalls from a mango tree close to and in full view of the village, when a tiger suddenly appeared. Before the men working nearby were able to render any assistance, it carried her off. No attempt was made to follow up the tiger, and as all signs of drag and blood trail had been obliterated and washed away long before I arrived on the scene, I was unable to find the place where the tiger had taken the body to.

Kot Kindri is about four miles south-west of Chuka, and three miles due west of Thak. It was in the valley between Kot Kindri and Thak that the Chuka man-eater had been shot the previous April.

During the summer of '38 the Forest Department had marked all the trees in this area for felling, and it was feared that if the man-eater was not accounted for before November— when the felling of the forest was due to start— the contractors would not be able to secure labour, and would repudiate their contracts. It was in this connexion that Donald Stewart had written to me shortly after the girl had been killed, and when in compliance with his request I promised to go to Kot Kindri, I must confess that it was more in the interests of the local inhabitants than in the interest of the contractors that I gave my promise.

My most direct route to Kot Kindri was to go by rail to Tanakpur, and from there by foot via Kaldhunga and Chuka. This route, however, though it would save me a hundred miles of walking, would necessitate my passing through the most deadly malaria belt in northern India, and to avoid it I decided to go through the hills to Mornaula, and from there along the abandoned Sherring road to its termination on the ridge above Kot Kindri.

While my preparations for this long trek were still under way a second report reached Naini Tal of a kill at Sem, a small village on the left bank of the Ladhya and distant about half a mile from Chuka.

The victim on this occasion was an elderly woman, the mother of the Headman of Sem. This unfortunate woman had been killed while cutting brushwood on a steep bank between two terraced fields. She had started work at the further end of the fifty-yard-long bank, and had cut the brushwood to within a yard of her hut when the tiger sprang on her from the field above. So sudden and unexpected was the attack that the woman only had time to scream once before the tiger killed her, and taking her up the twelve-foot-high bank crossed the upper field and disappeared with her into the dense jungle beyond. Her son, a lad some twenty years of age, was at the time working in a paddy field a few yards away and witnessed the whole occurrence, but was too frightened to try to render any assistance. In response to the lad's urgent summons the Patwari arrived at Sem two days later, accompanied by eighty men he had collected. Following up in the direction the tiger had gone, he found the woman's clothes and a few small bits of bone. This kill had taken place at 2 p.m. on a bright sunny day, and

the tiger had eaten its victim only sixty yards from the hut where it had killed her.

On receipt of this second report Ibbotson, Deputy Commissioner of the three Districts of Almora, Naini Tal and Garhwal, and I held, a council of war, the upshot of which was that Ibbotson, who was on the point of setting out to settle a land dispute at Askot on the border of Tibet, changed his tour programme and, instead of going via Bageshwar, decided to accompany me to Sem, and from there go on to Askot.

The route I had selected entailed a considerable amount of hill-climbing so we eventually decided to go up the Nandhour valley, cross the watershed between the Nandhour and Ladhya, and follow the latter river down to Sem. The Ibbotsons accordingly left Naini Tal on 12th October, and the following day I joined them at Chaurgallia.

Going up the Nandhour and fishing as we went— our best day's catch on light trout rods was a hundred and twenty fish— we arrived on the fifth day at Durga Pepal. Here we left the river, and after a very stiff climb camped for the night on the watershed. Making an early start next morning we pitched our tents that night on the left bank of the Ladhya, twelve miles from Chalti.

The monsoon had given over early, which was very fortunate for us, for owing to the rock cliffs that run sheer down into the valley the river has to be crossed every quarter of a mile or so. At one of these fords my cook, who stands five feet in his boots, was washed away and only saved from a watery grave by the prompt assistance of the man who was carrying our lunch basket.



On the tenth day after leaving Chaugallia we made camp on a deserted field at Sem, two hundred yards from the hut where the woman had been killed, and a hundred yards from the junction of the Ladhya and Sarda rivers.

Gill Waddell, of the Police, whom we met on our way down the Ladhya, had camped for several days at Sem and had tied out a buffalo that MacDonald of the Forest Department had very kindly placed at our disposal, and though the tiger had visited Sem several times during Waddell's stay, it had not killed the buffalo.

The day following our arrival at Sem, while Ibbotson was interviewing Patwaris, Forest Guards, and Headmen of the surrounding villages, I went out to look for pug marks. Between our camp and the junction, and also on both banks of the Ladhya, there were long stretches of sand. On this sand I found the tracks of a tigress, and of a young male tiger—possibly one of the cubs I had seen in April. The tigress had crossed and recrossed the Ladhya a number of times during the last few days, and the previous night had walked along the strip of sand in front of our tents. It was this tigress the villagers suspected of being the man-eater, and as she had visited Sem repeatedly since the day the Headman's mother had been killed they were probably correct.

An examination of the pug marks of the tigress showed her as being an average-sized animal, in the prime of life. Why she had become a man-eater would have to be determined later, but one of the reasons might have been that she had assisted to eat the victims of the Chuka tiger when they were together the previous mating season, and having acquired a taste for human flesh and no longer having a mate to provide her with it, had now turned a man-eater herself. This was only a surmise, and proved later to be incorrect.

Before leaving Naini Tal I had written to the Tahsildar of Tanakpur and asked him to purchase four young male buffaloes for me, and to send them to Sem. One of these buffaloes died on the road, the other three arrived on the 24th, and we tied them out the same evening together with the one MacDonald had given us. On going out to visit these animals next morning

I found the people of Chuka in a great state of excitement. The fields round the village had been recently ploughed, and the tigress the previous night had passed close to three families who were sleeping out on the fields with their cattle; fortunately in each case the cattle had seen the tigress and warned the sleepers of her approach. After leaving the cultivated land the tigress had gone up the track in the direction of Kot Kindri, and had passed close to two of our buffaloes without touching either of them.

The Patwari, Forest Guards, and villagers had told us on our arrival at Sem that it would be a waste of time tying out our young buffaloes, as they were convinced the man-eater would not kill them. The reason they gave was that this method of trying to shoot the man-eater had been tried by others without success, and that in any case if the tigress wanted to eat buffaloes there were many grazing in the jungles for her to choose from. In spite of this advice however we continued to tie out our buffaloes, and for the next two nights the tigress passed close to one or more of them, without touching them.

On the morning of the 27th, just as we were finishing breakfast, a party of men led by Tewari, the brother of the Headman of Thak, arrived in camp and reported that a man of their village was missing. They stated that this man had left the village at about noon the previous day, telling his wife before leaving that he was going to see that his cattle did not stray beyond the village boundary, and as he had not returned they feared he had been killed by the man-eater.

Our preparations were soon made, and at ten o'clock the Ibbotsons and I set off for Thak, accompanied by Tewari and the men he had brought with him. The distance was only about two miles but the climb was considerable, and as we did not want to lose more time than we could possibly help we arrived at the outskirts of the village out of breath, and in a lather of sweat.

As we approached the village over the scrub-covered flat bit of ground which I have reason to refer to later, we heard a woman crying. The wailing of an Indian woman mourning her dead is unmistakable, and on emerging from the jungle we came on the mourner—the wife of the missing man—



and some ten or fifteen men, who were waiting for us on the edge of the cultivated land. These people informed us that from their houses above they had seen some white object, which looked like part of the missing man's clothing, in a field overgrown with scrub thirty yards from where we were now standing. Ibbotson, Tewari and I set off to investigate the white object, while Mrs Ibbotson took the woman and the rest of the men up to the village.

The field, which had been out of cultivation for some years, was covered with a dense growth of scrub not unlike chrysanthemum, and it was not until we were standing right over the white object that Tewari recognized it as the loin-cloth of the missing man. Near it was the man's cap. A struggle had taken place at this spot, but there was no blood. The absence of blood where the attack had taken place and for some considerable distance along the drag could be accounted for by the tigress having retained her first hold, for no blood would flow in such a case until the hold had been changed.

Thirty yards on the hill above us there was a clump of bushes roofed over with creepers. This spot would have to be looked at before following up the drag, for it was not advisable to have the tigress behind us. In the soft earth under the bushes we found the pug marks of the tigress, and where she had lain before going forward to attack the man.

Returning to our starting point we agreed on the following plan of action. Our primary object was to try to stalk the tigress and shoot her on her kill: to achieve this end I was to follow the trail and at the same time keep a lookout in front, with Tewari— who was unarmed— a yard behind me keeping a sharp lookout to right and left, and Ibbotson a yard behind Tewari to safeguard us against an attack from the rear. In the event of either Ibbotson or I seeing so much as a hair of the tigress, we were to risk a shot.

Cattle had grazed over this area the previous day, disturbing the ground, and as there was no blood and the only indication of the tigress's passage was an occasional turned-up leaf or crushed blade of grass, progress was slow. After carrying the man for two hundred yards the tigress had killed and left him, and had returned and carried him off several hours later, when

the people of Thak had heard several sambur calling in this direction. The reason for the tigress not having carried the man away after she had killed him was possibly due to his cattle having witnessed the attack on him, and driven her away.

A big pool of blood had formed where the man had been lying, and as the blood from the wound in his throat had stopped flowing by the time the tigress had picked him up again, and further, as she was now holding him by the small of the back, whereas she had previously held him by the neck, tracking became even more difficult. The tigress kept to the contour of the hill, and as the undergrowth here was very dense and visibility only extended to a few yards, our advance was slowed down. In two hours we covered half a mile, and reached a ridge beyond which lay the valley in which, six months previously, we had tracked down and killed the Chuka man-eater. On this ridge was a great slab of rock, which sloped upwards and away from the direction in which we had come. The tigress's tracks went down to the right of the rock and I felt sure she was lying up under the overhanging portion of it, or in the close vicinity.

Both Ibbotson and I had on light rubber-soled shoes— Tewari was barefooted— and we had reached the rock without making a sound. Signing to my two companions to stand still and keep a careful watch all round, I got a foothold on the rock, and inch by inch went forward. Beyond the rock was a short stretch of flat ground, and as more of this ground came into view, I felt certain my suspicion that the tigress was lying under the projection was correct. I had still a foot or two to go before I could look over, when I saw a movement to my left front. A golden-rod that had been pressed down had sprung erect, and a second later there was a slight movement in the bushes beyond, and a monkey in a tree on the far side of the bushes started calling.

The tigress had chosen the spot for her after-dinner sleep with great care, but unfortunately for us she was not asleep; and when she saw the top of my head— I had removed my hat— appearing over the rock, she had risen and, taking a step sideways, had disappeared under a tangle of blackberry bushes. Had she been lying anywhere but where she was she could not have got away, no matter how quickly she had moved, without my getting a shot

at her. Our so-carefully-carried-out stalk had failed at the very last moment, and there was nothing to be done now but find the kill, and see if there was sufficient of it left for us to sit up over. To have followed her into the blackberry thicket would have been useless, and would also have reduced our chance of getting a shot at her later.

The tigress had eaten her meal close to where she had been lying and as this spot was open to the sky and to the keen eyes of vultures she had removed the kill to a place of safety where it would not be visible from the air. Tracking now was easy, for there was a blood trail to follow. The trail led over a ridge of great rocks and fifty yards beyond these rocks we found the kill.

I am not going to harrow your feelings by attempting to describe that poor torn and mangled thing; stripped of every stitch of clothing and atom of dignity, which only a few hours previously had been a Man, the father of two children and the breadwinner of the wailing woman who was facing—without any illusions— the fate of a widow of India. I have seen many similar sights, each more terrible than the one preceding it, in the thirty-two years I have been hunting man-eaters, and on each occasion I have felt that it would have been better to have left the victim to the slayer than recover a mangled mass of flesh to be a nightmare ever after to those who saw it. And yet the cry of blood for blood, and the burning desire to rid a countryside of a menace than which there is none more terrible, is irresistible; and then there is always the hope, no matter how absurd one knows it to be, that the victim by some miracle may still be alive and in need of succour.

The chance of shooting— over a kill— an animal that has in all probability become a man-eater through a wound received over a kill, is very remote, and each succeeding failure, no matter what its cause, tends to make the animal more cautious, until it reaches a state when it either abandons its kill after one meal or approaches it as silently and as slowly as a shadow, scanning every leaf and twig with the certainty of discovering its would-be slayer, no matter how carefully he may be concealed or how silent and motionless he may be; a one-in-a-million chance of getting a shot, and yet, who is there among us who would not take it?

The thicket into which the tigress had retired was roughly forty yards square, and she could not leave it without the monkey seeing her and warning us, so we sat down back to back, to have a smoke and listen if the jungle had anything further to tell us while we considered our next move.

To make a *machan* it was necessary to return to the village, and during our absence the tigress was almost certain to carry away the kill. It had been difficult when she was carrying a whole human being to track her, but now, when her burden was considerably lighter and she had been disturbed, she would probably go for miles and we might never find her kill again, so it was necessary for one of us to remain on the spot, while the other two went back to the village for ropes.

Ibbotson, with his usual disregard for danger, elected to go back, and while he and Tewari went down the hill to avoid the difficult ground we had recently come over, I stepped up on to a small tree close to the kill. Four feet above ground the tree divided in two, and by leaning on one half and putting my feet against the other, I was able to maintain a precarious seat which was high enough off the ground to enable me to see the tigress if she approached the kill, and also high enough, if she had any designs on me, to see her before she got to within striking distance.

Ibbotson had been gone fifteen or twenty minutes when I heard a rock tilt forward, and then back. The rock was evidently very delicately poised, and when the tigress had put her weight on it and felt it tilt forward she had removed her foot and let the rock fall back into place. The sound had come from about twenty yards to my left front, the only direction in which it would have been possible for me to have fired without being knocked out of the tree.

Minutes passed, each pulling my hopes down a little lower from the heights to which they had soared, and then, when tension on my nerves and the weight of the heavy rifle were becoming unbearable, I heard a stick snap at the upper end of the thicket. Here was an example of how a tiger can move through the jungle. From the sound she had made I knew her exact position, had kept my eyes fixed on the spot, and yet she had come,

seen me, stayed some time watching me, and then gone away without my having seen a leaf or a blade of grass move.

When tension on nerves is suddenly relaxed cramped and aching muscles call loudly for ease, and though in this case it only meant the lowering of the rifle on to my knees to take the strain off my shoulders and arms, the movement, small though it was, sent a comforting feeling through the whole of my body. No further sound came from the tigress, and an hour or two later I heard Ibbotson returning.

Of all the men I have been on *shikar* with Ibbotson is by far and away the best, for not only has he the heart of a lion, but he thinks of everything, and with it all is the most unselfish man that carries a gun. He had gone to fetch a rope and he returned with rugs, cushions, more hot tea than even I could drink and an ample lunch; and while I sat— on the windward side of the kill — to refresh myself, Ibbotson put a man in a tree forty yards away to distract the tigress's attention, and climbed into a tree overlooking the kill to make a rope machan.

When the *machan* was ready Ibbotson moved the kill a few feet— a very unpleasant job— and tied it securely to the foot of a sapling to prevent the tigress carrying it away, for the moon was on the wane and the first two hours of the night at this heavily wooded spot would be pitch dark. After a final smoke I climbed on to the machan, and when I had made myself comfortable Ibbotson recovered the man who was making a diversion and set off in the direction of Thak to pick up Mrs Ibbotson and return to camp at Sem.

The retreating party were out of sight but were not yet out of sound when I heard a heavy body brushing against leaves, and at the same moment the monkey, which had been silent all this time and which I could now see sitting in a tree on the far side of the blackberry thicket, started calling. Here was more luck than I hoped for, and our ruse of putting a man up a tree to cause a diversion appeared to be working as successfully as it had done on a previous occasion. A tense minute passed, a second, and a third, and then from the ridge where I had climbed on to the big slab of rock a

*kakar* came dashing down towards me, barking hysterically. The tigress was not coming to the kill but had gone off after Ibbotson. I was now in a fever of anxiety, for it was quite evident that she had abandoned her kill and gone to try to secure another victim.

Before leaving Ibbotson had promised to take every precaution but on hearing the *kakar* barking on my side of the ridge he would naturally assume the tigress was moving in the vicinity of the kill, and if he relaxed his precautions the tigress would get her chance. Ten very uneasy minutes for me passed, and then I heard a second *kakar* barking in the direction of Thak; the tigress was still following, but the ground there was more open, and there was less fear of her attacking the party. The danger to the Ibbotsons was, however, not over by any means for they had to go through two miles of very heavy jungle to reach camp; and if they stayed at Thak until sundown listening for my shot, which I feared they would do and which as a matter of fact they did do, they would run a very grave risk on the way down. Ibbotson fortunately realized the danger and kept his party close together, and though the tigress followed them the whole way— as her pug marks the following morning showed— they got back to camp safely.

The calling of *kakar* and sambur enabled me to follow the movements of the tigress. An hour after sunset she was down at the bottom of the valley two miles away. She had the whole night before her, and though there was only one chance in a million of her returning to the kill I determined not to lose that chance. Wrapping a rug round me, for it was a bitterly cold night, I made myself comfortable in a position in which I could remain for hours without movement.

I had taken my seat on the *machan* at 4 p.m., and at 10 p.m. I heard two animals coming down the hill towards me. It was too dark under the trees to see them, but when they got to the lee of the kill I knew they were porcupines. Rattling their quills, and making the peculiar booming noise that only a porcupine can make, they approached the kill and, after walking round it several times, continued on their way. An hour later, and when the moon had been up some time, I heard an animal in the valley below. It was

moving from east to west, and when it came into the wind blowing downhill from the kill it made a long pause, and then came cautiously up the hill. While it was still some distance away I heard it snuffing the air, and knew it to be a bear. The smell of blood was attracting him, but mingled with it was the less welcome smell of a human being, and taking no chances he was very carefully stalking the kill. His nose, the keenest of any animal's in the jungle, had apprised him while he was still in the valley that the kill was the property of a tiger. This to a Himalayan bear who fears nothing, and who will, as I have on several occasions seen, drive a tiger away from its kill, was no deterrent, but what was, and what was causing him uneasiness, was the smell of a human being mingled with the smell of blood and tiger.

On reaching the flat ground the bear sat down on his haunches a few yards from the kill, and when he had satisfied himself that the hated human smell held no danger for him he stood erect and turning his head sent a long-drawn-out cry, which I interpreted as a call to a mate, echoing down into the valley. Then without any further hesitation he walked boldly up to the kill, and as he nosed it I aligned the sights of my rifle on him. I know of only one instance of a Himalayan bear eating a human being; on that occasion a woman cutting grass had fallen down a cliff and been killed, and a bear finding the mangled body had carried it away and had eaten it. This bear, however, on whose shoulder my sights were aligned, appeared to draw the line at human flesh, and after looking at and smelling the kill continued his interrupted course to the west. When the sounds of his retreat died away in the distance the jungle settled down to silence until interrupted, a little after sunrise, by Ibbotson's very welcome arrival.

With Ibbotson came the brother and other relatives of the dead man, who very reverently wrapped the remains in a clean white cloth and, laying it on a cradle made of two saplings and rope which Ibbotson provided, set off for the burning ghat on the banks of the Sarda, repeating under their breath as they went the Hindu hymn of praise '*Ram nam sat hai*' with its refrain, '*Satya bol gat hai*'.

Fourteen hours in the cold had not been without its effect on me, but after partaking of the hot drink and food Ibbotson had brought, I felt none the

worse for my long vigil.

## II

After following the Ibbotsons down to Chuka on the evening of the 27th the tigress, some time during the night, crossed the Ladhya into the scrub jungle at the back of our camp. Through this scrub ran a path that had been regularly used by the villagers of the Ladhya valley until the advent of the man-eater had rendered its passage unsafe. On the 28th the two mail-runners who carried Ibbotson's *dak* on its first stage to Tanakpur got delayed in camp and to save time took, or more correctly started to take, a short cut through this scrub. Very fortunately the leading man was on the alert and saw the tigress as she crept through the scrub and lay down near the path ahead of them.

Ibbotson and I had just got back from Thak when these two men dashed into camp, and taking our rifles we hurried off to investigate. We found the pug marks of the tigress where she had come out on the path and followed the men for a short distance, but we did not see her though in one place where the scrub was very dense we saw a movement and heard an animal moving off.

On the morning of the 29th, a party of men came down from Thak to report that one of their bullocks had not returned to the cattle-shed the previous night, and on a search being made where it had last been seen a little blood had been found. At 2 p.m. the Ibbotsons and I were at this spot, and a glance at the ground satisfied us that the bullock had been killed and carried away by a tiger. After a hasty lunch Ibbotson and I, with two men following carrying ropes for a machan, set out along the drag. It went diagonally across the face of the hill for a hundred yards and then straight down into the ravine in which I had fired at and missed the big tiger in April. A few hundred yards down this ravine the bullock, which was an enormous animal, had got fixed between two rocks and, not being able to move it, the tiger had eaten a meal off its hind quarters and left it.



The pug marks of the tiger, owing to the great weight she was carrying, were splayed out and it was not possible to say whether she was the man-eater or not; but as every tiger in this area was suspect I decided to sit up over the kill. There was only one tree within reasonable distance of the kill, and as the men climbed into it to make a *machan* the tiger started calling in the valley below. Very hurriedly a few strands of rope were tied between two branches, and while Ibbotson stood on guard with his rifle I climbed the tree and took my seat on what, during the next fourteen hours, proved to be the most uncomfortable as well as the most dangerous *machan* I have ever sat on. The tree was leaning away from the hill, and from the three uneven strands of rope I was sitting on there was a drop of over a hundred feet into the rocky ravine below.

The tiger called several times as I was getting into the tree and continued to call at longer intervals late into the evening, the last call coming from a ridge half a mile away. It was now quite evident that the tiger had been lying up close to the kill and had seen the men climbing into the tree. Knowing from past experience what this meant, she had duly expressed resentment at being disturbed and then gone away, for though I sat on the three strands of rope until Ibbotson returned next morning I did not see or hear anything throughout the night.

Vultures were not likely to find the kill, for the ravine was deep and overshadowed by trees, and as the bullock was large enough to provide the tiger with several meals we decided not to sit up over it again where it was now lying, hoping the tiger would remove it to some more convenient place where we should have a better chance of getting a shot. In this however we were disappointed, for the tiger did not again return to the kill.

Two nights later the buffalo we had tied out behind our camp at Sem was killed, and through a little want of observation on my part a great opportunity of bagging the man-eater was lost.

The men who brought in the news of this kill reported that the rope securing the animal had been broken, and that the kill had been carried away up the ravine at the lower end of which it had been tied. This was the

same ravine in which MacDonald and I had chased a tigress in April, and as on that occasion she had taken her kill some distance up the ravine I now very foolishly concluded she had done the same with this kill.

After breakfast Ibbotson and I went out to find the kill and see what prospect there was for an evening sit-up.

The ravine in which the buffalo had been killed was about fifty yards wide and ran deep into the foot-hills. For two hundred yards the ravine was straight and then bent round to the left. Just beyond the bend, and on the left-hand side of it, there was a dense patch of young saplings backed by a hundred-foot ridge on which thick grass was growing. In the ravine, and close to the saplings, there was a small pool of water. I had been up the ravine several times in April and had failed to mark the patch of saplings as being a likely place for a tiger to lie up in, and did not take the precautions I should have taken when rounding the bend, with the result that the tigress who was drinking at the pool saw us first. There was only one safe line of retreat for her and she took it. This was straight up the steep hill, over the ridge, and into the sal forest beyond.

The hill was too steep for us to climb, so we continued on up the ravine to where a sambur track crossed it, and following this track we gained the ridge. The tigress was now in a triangular patch of jungle bounded by the ridge, the Ladhya, and a cliff down which no animal could go. The area was not large, and there were several deer in it which from time to time advised us of the position of the tigress, but unfortunately the ground was cut up by a number of deep and narrow rain-water channels in which we eventually lost touch with her.

We had not yet seen the kill, so we re-entered the ravine by the sambur track and found the kill hidden among the saplings. These saplings were from six inches to a foot in girth, and were not strong enough to support a machan, so we had to abandon the idea of a machan. With the help of a crowbar a rock could possibly have been prised from the face of the hill and a place made in which to sit, but this was not advisable when dealing with a man-eater.

Reluctant to give up the chance of a shot we considered the possibility of concealing ourselves in the grass near the kill, in the hope that the tigress would return before dark and that we should see her before she saw us. There were two objections to this plan: (a) if we did not get a shot and the tigress saw us near her kill she might abandon it as she had done her other two kills and (b) between the kill and camp there was very heavy scrub jungle, and if we tried to go through this jungle in the dark the tigress would have us at her mercy. So very reluctantly we decided to leave the kill to the tigress for that night, and hope for the best on the morrow.

On our return next morning we found that the tigress had carried away the kill. For three hundred yards she had gone up the bed of the ravine, stepping from rock to rock, and leaving no drag marks. At this spot— three hundred yards from where she had picked up the kill— we were at fault, for though there were a number of tracks on a wet patch of ground, none of them had been made while she was carrying the kill. Eventually, after casting round in circles, we found where she had left the ravine and gone up the hill on the left.

This hill up which the tigress had taken her kill was overgrown with ferns and goldenrod and tracking was not difficult, but the going was, for the hill was very steep and in places a detour had to be made and the track picked up further on. After a stiff climb of a thousand feet we came to a small plateau, bordered on the left by a cliff a mile wide. On the side of the plateau nearest the cliff the ground was seamed and cracked, and in these cracks a dense growth of sal, two to six feet in height, had sprung up. The tigress had taken her kill into this dense cover and it was not until we actually trod on it that we were aware of its position.

As we stopped to look at all that remained of the buffalo there was a low growl to our right. With rifles raised we waited for a minute and then, hearing a movement in the undergrowth a little beyond where the growl had come from, we pushed our way through the young sal for ten yards and came on a small clearing, where the tigress had made herself a bed on some soft grass. On the far side of this grass the hill sloped upwards for twenty yards to another plateau, and it was from this slope that the sound we had

heard had come. Proceeding up the slope as silently as possible we had just reached the flat ground, which was about fifty yards wide, when the tigress left the far side and went down into the ravine, disturbing some kaleege pheasants and a *kakar* as she did so. To have followed her would have been useless, so we went back to the kill and, as there was still a good meal on it, we selected two trees to sit in, and returned to camp.

After an early lunch we went back to the kill and, hampered with our rifles, climbed with some difficulty into the trees we had selected. We sat up for five hours without seeing or hearing anything. At dusk we climbed down from our trees, and stumbling over the cracked and uneven ground eventually reached the ravine when it was quite dark. Both of us had an uneasy feeling that we were being followed, but by keeping close together we reached camp without incident at 9 p.m.

The Ibbotsons had now stayed at Sem as long as it was possible for them to do so, and early next morning they set out on their twelve days' walk to keep their appointment at Askot. Before leaving, Ibbotson extracted a promise from me that I would not follow up any kills alone, or further endanger my life by prolonging my stay at Sem for more than a day or two.

After the departure of the Ibbotsons and their fifty men, the camp, which was surrounded by dense scrub, was reduced to my two servants and myself — my coolies were living in a room in the Headman's house— so throughout the day I set all hands to collecting driftwood, of which there was an inexhaustible supply at the junction, to keep a fire going all night. The fire would not scare away the tigress but it would enable us to see her if she prowled round our tents at night, and anyway the nights were setting in cold and there was ample excuse, if one were needed, for keeping a big fire going all night.

Towards evening, when my men were safely back in camp, I took a rifle and went up the Ladhya to see if the tigress had crossed the river. I found several tracks in the sand, but no fresh ones, and at dusk I returned, convinced that the tigress was still on our side of the river. An hour later,

when it was quite dark, a *kakar* started barking close to our tents and barked persistently for half an hour.

My men had taken over the job of tying out the buffaloes, a task which Ibbotson's men had hitherto performed, and next morning I accompanied them when they went out to bring in the buffaloes. Though we covered several miles I did not find any trace of the tigress. After breakfast I took a rod and went down to the junction, and had one of the best day's fishing I have ever had. The junction was full of big fish, and though my light tackle was broken frequently I killed sufficient *mahseer* to feed the camp.

Again, as on the previous evening, I crossed the Ladhya, with the intention of taking up a position on a rock overlooking the open ground on the right bank of the river and watching for the tigress to cross. As I got away from the roar of the water at the junction I heard a sambur and a monkey calling on the hill to my left, and as I neared the rock I came on the fresh tracks of the tigress. Following them back I found the stones still wet where she had forded the river. A few minutes' delay in camp to dry my fishing line and have a cup of tea cost a man his life, several thousand men weeks of anxiety, and myself many days of strain, for though I stayed at Sem for another three days I did not get another chance of shooting the tigress.

On the morning of the 7th, as I was breaking camp and preparing to start on my twenty-mile walk to Tanakpur, a big contingent of men from all the surrounding villages arrived, and begged me not to leave them to the tender mercies of the maneater. Giving them what advice it was possible to give people situated as they were, I promised to return as soon as it was possible for me to do so.

I caught the train at Tanakpur next morning and arrived back in Naini Tal on 9 November, having been away nearly a month.

### III

I left Sem on the 7th of November and on the 12th the tigress killed a man at Thak. I received news of this kill through the Divisional Forest Officer, Haidwani, shortly after we had moved down to our winter home at the foot of the hills, and by doing forced marches I arrived at Chuka a little after sunrise on the 24th.

It had been my intention to breakfast at Chuka and then go on to Thak and make that village my headquarters, but the Headman of Thak, whom I found installed at Chuka, informed me that every man, woman, and child had left Thak immediately after the man had been killed on the 12th, and added that if I carried out my intention of camping at Thak I might be able to safeguard my own life, but it would not be possible to safeguard the lives of my men. This was quite reasonable, and while waiting for my men to arrive, the Headman helped me to select a site for my camp at Chuka where my men would be reasonably safe and I should have some privacy from the thousands of men who were now arriving to fell the forest.

On receipt of the Divisional Forest Officer's telegram acquainting me of the kill, I had telegraphed to the Tahsildar at Tanakpur to send three young male buffaloes to Chuka. My request had been promptly complied with and the three animals had arrived the previous evening.

After breakfast I took one of the buffaloes and set out for Thak, intending to tie it up on the spot where the man had been killed on the 12th. The Headman had given me a very graphic account of the events of that date, for he himself had nearly fallen a victim to the tigress. It appeared that towards the afternoon, accompanied by his granddaughter, a girl ten years of age, he had gone to dig up ginger tubers in a field some sixty yards from his house. This field is about half an acre in extent and is surrounded on three sides by jungle, and being on the slope of a fairly steep hill it is visible from the Headman's house. After the old man and his granddaughter had been at work for some time his wife, who was husking rice in the courtyard of the house, called out in a very agitated voice and asked him if he was deaf that he could not hear the pheasants and other birds that were chattering in the jungle above him. Fortunately for him, he acted promptly. Dropping his hoe, he grabbed the child's hand and together they ran back to

the house, urged on by the woman who said she could now see a red animal in the bushes at the upper end of the field. Half an hour later the tigress killed a man who was lopping branches off a tree in a field three hundred yards from the Headman's house.

From the description I had received from the Headman I had no difficulty in locating the tree. It was a small gnarled tree growing out of a three-foot-high bank between two terraced fields, and had been lopped year after year for cattle fodder. The man who had been killed was standing on the trunk holding one branch and cutting another, when the tigress came up from behind, tore his hold from the branch and, after killing him, carried him away into the dense brushwood bordering the fields.

Thak village was a gift from the Chand Rajas, who ruled Kumaon for many hundreds of years before the Gurkha occupation, to the forefathers of the present owners in return for their services at the Punagiri temples. (The promise made by the Chand Rajas that the lands of Thak and two other villages would remain rent-free for all time has been honoured by the British Government for a hundred years.) From a collection of grass huts the village has in the course of time grown into a very prosperous settlement with masonry houses roofed with slate tiles, for not only is the land very fertile, but the revenue from the temples is considerable.

Like all other villages in Kumaon, Thak during its hundreds of years of existence has passed through many vicissitudes, but never before in its long history had it been deserted as it now was. On my previous visits I had found it a hive of industry, but when I went up to it this afternoon, taking the young buffalo with me, silence reigned over it. Every one of the hundred or more inhabitants had fled taking their livestock with them—the only animal I saw in the village was a cat, which gave me a warm welcome; so hurried had the evacuation been that many of the doors of the houses had been left wide open. On every path in the village, in the courtyard of the houses and in the dust before all the doors I found the tigress's pug marks. The open doorways were a menace, for the path as it wound through the village passed close to them, and in any of the houses the tigress might have been lurking.

On the hill thirty yards above the village were several cattle shelters, and in the vicinity of these shelters I saw more kaleege pheasants, red jungle fowl and white-capped babblers than I have ever before seen, and from the confiding way in which they permitted me to walk among them it is quite evident that the people of Thak have a religious prejudice against the taking of life.

From the terraced fields above the cattle shelters a bird's-eye view of the village is obtained, and it was not difficult, from the description the Headman had given me, to locate the tree where the tigress had secured her last victim. In the soft earth under the tree there were signs of a struggle and a few clots of dried blood. From here the tigress had carried her kill a hundred yards over a ploughed field, through a stout hedge, and into the dense brushwood beyond. The foot-prints from the village, and back the way they had come, showed that the entire population of the village had visited the scene of the kill, but from the tree to the hedge there was only one track, the track the tigress had made when carrying away her victim. No attempt had been made to follow her up and recover the body.

Scraping away a little earth from under the tree I exposed a root and to this root I tied my buffalo, bedding it down with a liberal supply of straw taken from a nearby haystack.

The village, which is on the north face of the hill, was now in shadow, and if I was to get back to camp before dark it was time for me to make a start. Skirting round the village to avoid the menace of the open doorways, I joined the path below the houses.

This path after it leaves the village passes under a giant mango tree from the roots of which issues a cold spring of clear water. After running along a groove cut in a massive slab of rock, this water falls into a rough masonry trough, from where it spreads onto the surrounding ground, rendering it soft and slushy. I had drunk at the spring on my way up, leaving my foot-prints in this slushy ground, and on approaching the spring now for a second drink, I found the tigress's pug marks superimposed on my foot-prints. After quenching her thirst the tigress had avoided the path and had gained



the village by climbing a steep bank overgrown with strobilanthes and nettles, and taking up a position in the shelter of one of the houses had possibly watched me while I was tying up the buffalo, expecting me to return the way I had gone; it was fortunate for me that I had noted the danger of passing those open doorways a second time, and had taken the longer way round.

When coming up from Chuka I had taken every precaution to guard against a sudden attack, and it was well that I had done so, for I now found from her pug marks that the tigress had followed me all the way up from my camp, and next morning when I went back to Thak I found she had followed me from where I had joined the path below the houses, right down to the cultivated land at Chuka.

Reading with the illumination I had brought with me was not possible, so after dinner that night, while sitting near a fire which was as welcome for its warmth as it was for the feeling of security it gave me, I reviewed the whole situation and tried to think out some plan by which it would be possible to circumvent the tigress.

When leaving home on the 22nd I had promised that I would return in ten days, and that this would be my last expedition after man-eaters. Years of exposure and strain and long absences from home extending as in the case of the Chowgarh tigress and the Rudraprayag leopard to several months on end were beginning to tell as much on my constitution as on the nerves of those at home, and if by the 30th of November I had not succeeded in killing this man-eater, others would have to be found who were willing to take on the task.

It was now the night of the 24th, so I had six clear days before me. Judging from the behaviour of the tigress that evening she appeared to be anxious to secure another human victim, and it should not therefore be difficult for me, in the time at my disposal, to get in touch with her. There were several methods by which this could be accomplished, and each would be tried in turn. The method that offers the greatest chance of success of shooting a tiger in the hills is to sit up in a tree over a kill, and if during that

night the tigress did not kill the buffalo I had tied up at Thak, I would the following night, and every night thereafter, tie up the other two buffaloes in places I had already selected, and failing to secure a human kill it was just possible that the tigress might kill one of my buffaloes, as she had done on a previous occasion when the Ibbotsons and I were camped at Sem in April. After making up the fire with logs that would burn all night, I turned in, and went to sleep listening to a *kakar* barking in the scrub jungle behind my tent.

While breakfast was being prepared the following morning I picked up a rifle and went out to look for tracks on the stretch of sand on the right bank of the river, between Chuka and Sem. The path, after leaving the cultivated land, runs for a short distance through scrub jungle, and here I found the tracks of a big male leopard, possibly the same animal that had alarmed the *kakar* the previous night. A small male tiger had crossed and recrossed the Ladhya many times during the past week, and in the same period the man-eater had crossed only once, coming from the direction of Sem. A big bear had traversed the sand a little before my arrival, and when I got back to camp the timber contractors complained that while distributing work that morning they had run into a bear which had taken up a very threatening attitude, in consequence of which their labour had refused to work in the area in which the bear had been seen.

Several thousand men—the contractors put the figure at five thousand—had now concentrated at Chuka and Kumaya Chak to fell and saw up the timber and carry it down to the motor road that was being constructed, and all the time this considerable labour force was working they shouted at the tops of their voices to keep up their courage. The noise in the valley resulting from axe and saw, the crashing of giant trees down the steep hillside, the breaking of rocks with sledge hammers, and combined with it all the shouting of thousands of men, can better be imagined than described. That there were many frequent alarms in this nervous community was only natural, and during the next few days I covered much ground and lost much valuable time in investigating false rumours of attacks and kills by the man-eater, for the dread of the tigress was not confined to the Ladhya valley but extended right down the Sarda through Kaldhunga to the gorge, an area of

roughly fifty square miles in which an additional ten thousand men were working.

That a single animal should terrorize a labour force of these dimensions in addition to the residents of the surrounding villages and the hundreds of men who were bringing foodstuffs for the labourers or passing through the valley with hill produce in the way of oranges (purchasable at twelve annas a hundred), walnuts, and chillies to the market at Tanakpur, is incredible, and would be unbelievable were it not for the historical, and nearly parallel, case of the man-eater of Tsavo, where a pair of lions, operating only at night, held up work for long periods on the Uganda Railway.

To return to my story. Breakfast disposed of on the morning of the 25th, I took a second buffalo and set out for Thak. The path, after leaving the cultivated land at Chuka, skirts along the foot of the hill for about half a mile before it divides. One arm goes straight up a ridge to Thak and the other, after continuing along the foot of the hill for another half-mile, zigzags up through Kumaya Chak to Kot Kindri.

At the divide I found the pug marks of the tigress and followed them all the way back to Thak. The fact that she had come down the hill after me the previous evening was proof that she had not killed the buffalo. This, though very disappointing, was not at all unusual; for tigers will on occasions visit an animal that is tied up for several nights in succession before they finally kill it, for tigers do not kill unless they are hungry.

Leaving the second buffalo at the mango tree, where there was an abundance of green grass, I skirted round the houses and found No. 1 buffalo sleeping peacefully after a big feed and a disturbed night. The tigress, coming from the direction of the village as her pug marks showed, had approached to within a few feet of the buffalo, and had then gone back the way she had come. Taking the buffalo down to the spring I let it graze for an hour or two, and then took it back and tied it up at the same spot where it had been the previous night.

The second buffalo I tied up fifty yards from the mango tree and at the spot where the wailing woman and villagers had met us the day the Ibbotsons and I had gone up to investigate the human kill. Here a ravine a few feet deep crossed the path, on one side of which there was a dry stump, and on the other an almond tree in which a *machan* could be made. I tied No. 2 buffalo to the stump, and bedded it down with sufficient hay to keep it going for several days. There was nothing more to be done at Thak so I returned to camp and, taking the third buffalo, crossed the Ladhya and tied it up behind Sem, in the ravine where the tigress had killed one of our buffaloes in April.

At my request the Tahsildar of Tanakpur had selected three of the fattest young male buffaloes he could find. All three were now tied up in places frequented by the tigress, and as I set out to visit them on the morning of the 26th I had great hopes that one of them had been killed and that I should get an opportunity of shooting the tigress over it. Starting with the one across the Ladhya, I visited all in turn and found that the tigress had not touched any of them. Again, as on the previous morning, I found her tracks on that path leading to Thak, but on this occasion there was a double set of pug marks, one coming down and the other going back. On both her journeys the tigress had kept to the path and had passed within a few feet of the buffalo that was tied to the stump, fifty yards from the mango tree.

On my return to Chuka a deputation of Thak villagers led by the Headman came to my tent and requested me to accompany them to the village to enable them to replenish their supply of foodstuffs, so at midday, followed by the Headman and his tenants, and by four of my own men carrying ropes for a *machan* and food for me, I returned to Thak and mounted guard while the men hurriedly collected the provisions they needed.

After watering and feeding the two buffaloes I retied No. 2 to the stump and took No. 1 half a mile down the hill and tied it to a sapling on the side of the path. I then took the villagers back to Chuka and returned a few hundred yards up the hill for a scratch meal while my men were making the *machan*.

It was now quite evident that the tigress had no fancy for my fat buffaloes, and as in three days I had seen her tracks five times on the path leading to Thak, I decided to sit up over the path and try to get a shot at her that way. To give me warning of the tigress's approach I tied a goat with a bell round its neck on the path, and at 4 p.m. I climbed into the tree. I told my men to return at 8 a.m. the following morning, and began my watch.

At sunset a cold wind started blowing and while I was attempting to pull a coat over my shoulders the ropes on one side of the *machan* slipped, rendering my seat very uncomfortable. An hour later a storm came on, and though it did not rain for long it wet me to the skin, greatly adding to my discomfort. During the sixteen hours I sat in the tree I did not see or hear anything. The men turned up at 8 a.m. I returned to camp for a hot bath and a good meal, and then, accompanied by six of my men, set out for Thak.

The overnight rain had washed all the old tracks off the path, and two hundred yards above the tree I had sat in I found the fresh pug marks of the tigress, where she had come out of the jungle and gone up the path in the direction of Thak. Very cautiously I stalked the first buffalo, only to find it lying asleep on the path; the tigress had skirted round it, rejoined the path a few yards further on and continued up the hill. Following on her tracks I approached the second buffalo, and as I got near the place where it had been tied two blue Himalayan magpies rose off the ground and went screaming down the hill.

The presence of these birds indicated (a) that the buffalo was dead, (b) that it had been partly eaten and not carried away, and (c) that the tigress was not in the close vicinity.

On arrival at the stump to which it had been tied I saw that the buffalo had been dragged off the path and partly eaten, and on examining the animal I found that it had not been killed by the tigress but that it had in all probability died of snake-bite (there were many hamadryads in the surrounding jungles), and that, finding it lying dead on the path, the tigress had eaten a meal off it and had then tried to drag it away. When she found

she could not break the rope, she had partly covered the kill over with dry leaves and brush-wood and continued on her way up to Thak.

Tigers as a rule are not carrion eaters but they do on occasions eat animals they themselves have not killed. For instance, on one occasion I left the carcass of a leopard on a fire track and, when I returned next morning to recover a knife I had forgotten, I found that a tiger had removed the carcass to a distance of a hundred yards and eaten two-thirds of it.

On my way up from Chuka I had dismantled the *machan* I had sat on the previous night, and while two of my men climbed into the almond tree to make a seat for me—the tree was not big enough for a machan—the other four went to the spring to fill a kettle and boil some water for tea. By 4 p.m. I had partaken of a light meal of biscuits and tea which would have to keep me going until next day, and refusing the men's request to be permitted to stay the night in one of the houses in Thak, I sent them back to camp. There was a certain amount of risk in doing this, but it was nothing compared to the risk they would run if they spent the night in Thak.

My seat on the tree consisted of several strands of rope tied between two upright branches, with a couple of strands lower down for my feet to rest on. When I had settled down comfortably I pulled the branches round me and secured them in position with a thin cord, leaving a small opening to see and fire through. My 'hide' was soon tested, for shortly after the men had gone the two magpies returned, and attracted others, and nine of them fed on the kill until dusk. The presence of the birds enabled me to get some sleep, for they would have given me warning of the tigress's approach, and with their departure my all-night vigil started.

There was still sufficient daylight to shoot by when the moon, a day off the full, rose over the Nepal hills behind me and flooded the hillside with brilliant light. The rain of the previous night had cleared the atmosphere of dust and smoke and, after the moon had been up a few minutes, the light was so good that I was able to see a sambur and her young one feeding in a field of wheat a hundred and fifty yards away.

The dead buffalo was directly in front and about twenty yards away, and the path along which I expected the tigress to come was two or three yards nearer, so I should have an easy shot at a range at which it would be impossible to miss the tigress— provided she came; and there was no reason why she should not do so.

The moon had been up two hours, and the sambur had approached to within fifty yards of my tree, when a *kakar* started barking on the hill just above the village. The *kakar* had been barking for some minutes when suddenly a scream which I can only very inadequately describe as ‘Ar-Ar-Arr’ dying away on a long-drawn-out note, came from the direction of the village. So sudden and so unexpected had the scream been that I involuntarily stood up with the intention of slipping down from the tree and dashing up to the village, for the thought flashed through my mind that the man-eater was killing one of my men. Then in a second flash of thought I remembered I had counted them one by one as they had passed my tree, and that I had watched them out of sight on their way back to camp to see if they were obeying my instructions to keep close together.

The scream had been the despairing cry of a human being in mortal agony, and reason questioned how such a sound could have come from a deserted village. It was not a thing of my imagination, for the *kakar* had heard it and had abruptly stopped barking, and the sambur had dashed away across the fields closely followed by her young one. Two days previously, when I had escorted the men to the village, I had remarked that they appeared to be very confiding to leave their property behind doors that were not even shut or latched, and the Headman had answered that even if their village remained untenanted for years their property would be quite safe, for they were priests of Punagiri and no one would dream of robbing them; he added that as long as the tigress lived she was a better guard of their property— if guard were needed— than any hundred men could be, for no one in all that countryside would dare to approach the village, for any purpose, through the dense forests that surrounded it, unless escorted by me as they had been.

The screams were not repeated, and as there appeared to be nothing that I could do I settled down again on my rope seat. At 10 p.m. a *kakar* that was feeding on the young wheat crop at the lower end of the fields dashed away barking, and a minute later the tigress called twice. She had now left the village and was on the move, and even if she did not fancy having another meal off the buffalo there was every hope of her coming along the path which she had used twice every day for the past few days. With finger on trigger and eyes straining on the path I sat hour after hour until daylight succeeded moonlight, and when the sun had been up an hour, my men returned. Very thoughtfully they had brought a bundle of dry wood with them, and in a surprisingly short time I was sitting down to a hot cup of tea. The tigress may have been lurking in the bushes close to us, or she may have been miles away, for after she had called at 10 p.m. the jungles had been silent.

When I got back to camp I found a number of men sitting near my tent. Some of these men had come to inquire what luck I had had the previous night, and others had come to tell me that the tigress had called from midnight to a little before sunrise at the foot of the hill, and that all the labourers engaged in the forests and on the new export road were too frightened to go to work. I had already heard about the tigress from my men, who had informed me that, together with the thousands of men who were camped round Chuka, they had sat up all night to keep big fires going.

Among the men collected near my tent was the Headman of Thak, and when the others had gone I questioned him about the kill at Thak on the 12th of the month when he so narrowly escaped falling a victim to the man-eater.

Once again the Headman told me in great detail how he had gone to his fields to dig ginger, taking his grandchild with him, and how on hearing his wife calling he had caught the child's hand and run back to the house—where his wife had said a word or two to him about not keeping his ears open and thereby endangering his own and the child's life—and how a few minutes later the tigress had killed a man while he was cutting leaves off a tree in a field above his house.



All this part of the story I had heard before, and I now asked him if he had actually seen the tigress killing the man. His answer was, no; and he added that the tree was not visible from where he had been standing. I then asked him how he knew the man had been killed, and he said, because he had heard him. In reply to further questions he said the man had not called for help but had cried out; and when asked if he had cried out once he said, 'No, three times ', and then at my request he gave an imitation of the man's cry. It was the same— but a very modified rendering— as the screams I had heard the previous night.

I then told him what I had heard and asked him if it was possible for anyone to have arrived at the village accidentally, and his answer was an emphatic negative. There were only two paths leading to Thak, and every man, woman, and child in the villages through which these two paths passed knew that Thak was deserted and the reason for its being so. It was known throughout the district that it was dangerous to go near Thak in daylight, and it was therefore quite impossible for anyone to have been in the village at eight o'clock the previous night.

When asked if he could give any explanation for screams having come from a village in which there could not— according to him— have been any human beings, his answer was that he could not.

And as I could do no better than the Headman it were best to assume that neither the kakar, the sambur, nor I heard those very real screams— the screams of a human being in mortal agony.

## IV

When all my visitors, including the Headman, had gone, and I was having breakfast, my servant informed me that the Headman of Sem had come to the camp the previous evening and had left word for me that his wife, while cutting grass near the hut where his mother had been killed, had come on a blood trail, and that he would wait for me near the ford over the Ladhya in the morning. So after breakfast I set out to investigate this trail.

While I was fording the river I saw four men hurrying towards me, and as soon as I was on dry land they told me that when they were coming down the hill above Sem they had heard a tiger calling across the valley on the hill between Chuka and Thak. The noise of the water had prevented my hearing the call. I told the men that I was on my way to Sem and would return to Chuka shortly, and left them.

The Headman was waiting for me near his house, and his wife took me to where she had seen the blood trail the previous day. The trail, after continuing along a field for a short distance, crossed some big rocks, on one of which I found the hairs of a kakar. A little further on I found the pug marks of a big male leopard, and while I was looking at them I heard a tiger call. Telling my companions to sit down and remain quiet, I listened, in order to locate the tiger. Presently I heard the call again, and thereafter it was repeated at intervals of about two minutes.

It was the tigress calling and I located her as being five hundred yards below Thak and in the deep ravine which, starting from the spring under the mango tree, runs parallel to the path and crosses it at its junction with the Kumaya Chak path.

Telling the Headman that the leopard would have to wait to be shot at a more convenient time, I set off as hard as I could go for camp, picking up at the ford the four men who were waiting for my company to Chuka.

On reaching camp I found a crowd of men round my tent, most of them sawyers from Delhi, but including the petty contractors, agents, clerks, timekeepers, and gangmen of the financier who had taken up the timber and road construction contracts in the Ladhya valley. These men had come to see me in connexion with my stay at Chuka. They informed me that many of the hillmen carrying timber and working on the road had left for their homes that morning and that if I left Chuka on 1st December, as they had heard I intended doing, the entire labour force, including themselves, would leave on the same day; for already they were too frightened to eat or sleep, and no one would dare to remain in the valley after I had gone. It was then the morning of 29th November and I told the men that I still had two days

and two nights and that much could happen in that time, but that in any case it would not be possible for me to prolong my stay beyond the morning of the 1st.

The tigress had by now stopped calling, and when my servant had put up something for me to eat I set out for Thak, intending, if the tigress called again and I could locate her position; to try to stalk her; and if she did not call again, to sit up over the buffalo. I found her tracks on the path and saw where she had entered the ravine, and though I stopped repeatedly on my way up to Thak and listened I did not hear her again. So a little before sunset I ate the biscuits and drank the bottle of tea I had brought with me, and then climbed into the almond tree and took my seat on the few strands of rope that had to serve me as a machan. On this occasion the magpies were absent, so I was unable to get the hour or two's sleep the birds had enabled me to get the previous evening.

If a tiger fails to return to its kill the first night it does not necessarily mean that the kill has been abandoned. I have on occasions seen a tiger return on the tenth night and eat what could no longer be described as fresh. On the present occasion, however, I was not sitting over a kill, but over an animal that the tigress had found dead and off which she had made a small meal, and had she not been a man-eater I would not have considered the chance of her returning the second night good enough to justify spending a whole night in a tree when she had not taken sufficient interest in the dead buffalo to return to it the first night. It was therefore with very little hope of getting a shot that I sat on the tree from sunset to sunrise, and though the time I spent was not as long as it had been the previous night, my discomfort was very much greater, for the ropes I was sitting on cut into me, and a cold wind that started blowing shortly after moonrise and continued throughout the night chilled me to the bone. On this second night I heard no jungle or other sounds nor did the sambur and her young one come out to feed on the fields. As daylight was succeeding moonlight I thought I heard a tiger call in the distance, but could not be sure of the sound or of its direction.

When I got back to camp my servant had a cup of tea and a hot bath ready for me, but before I could indulge in the latter— my 40-lb. tent was not big enough for me to bathe in— I had to get rid of the excited throng of people who were clamouring to tell me their experiences of the night before. It appeared that shortly after moonrise the tigress had started calling close to Chuka, and after calling at intervals for a couple of hours had gone off in the direction of the labour camps at Kumaya Chak. The men in these camps hearing her coming started shouting to try to drive her away, but so far from having this effect the shouting only infuriated her the more and she demonstrated in front of the camps until she had cowed the men into silence. Having accomplished this she spent the rest of the night between the labour camps and Chuka, daring all and sundry to shout at her. Towards morning she had gone away in the direction of Thak, and my informants were surprised and very disappointed that I had not met her.

This was my last day of man-eater hunting, and though I was badly in need of rest and sleep, I decided to spend what was left of it in one last attempt to get in touch with the tigress.

The people not only of Chuka and Sem but of all the surrounding villages, and especially the men from Talla Des where some years previously I had shot three man-eaters, were very anxious that I should try sitting up over a live goat, for, said they, 'All hill tigers eat goats, and as you have had no luck with buffaloes, why not try a goat?' More to humour them than with any hope of getting a shot, I consented to spend this last day in sitting up over the two goats I had already purchased for this purpose.

I was convinced that no matter where the tigress wandered to at night her headquarters were at Thak, so at midday, taking the two goats, and accompanied by four of my men, I set out for Thak.

The path from Chuka to Thak, as I have already mentioned, runs up a very steep ridge. A quarter of a mile on this side of Thak the path leaves the ridge, and crosses a more or less flat bit of ground which extends right up to the mango tree. For its whole length across this flat ground the path passes through dense brushwood, and is crossed by two narrow ravines which run

east and join the main ravine. Midway between these two ravines, and a hundred yards from the tree I had sat in the previous two nights, there is a giant almond tree; this tree had been my objective when I left camp. The path passes right under the tree and I thought that if I climbed half-way up not only should I be able to see the two goats, one of which I intended tying at the edge of the main ravine and the other at the foot of the hill to the right, but I should also be able to see the dead buffalo. As all three of these points were at some distance from the tree, I armed myself with an accurate .275 rifle, in addition to the 450/400 rifle which I took for an emergency.

I found the climb up from Chuka on this last day very trying, and I had just reached the spot where the path leaves the ridge for the flat ground, when the tigress called about a hundred and fifty yards to my left. The ground here was covered with dense undergrowth and trees interlaced with creepers, and was cut up by narrow and deep ravines, and strewn over with enormous boulders—a very unsuitable place in which to stalk a man-eater. However, before deciding on what action I should take it was necessary to know whether the tigress was lying down, as she very well might be, for it was then 1 p.m., or whether she was on the move and if so in what direction. So making the men sit down behind me I listened, and presently the call was repeated; she had moved some fifty yards, and appeared to be going up the main ravine in the direction of Thak.

This was very encouraging, for the tree I had selected to sit in was only fifty yards from the ravine. After enjoining silence on the men and telling them to keep close behind me, we hurried along the path. We had about two hundred yards to go to reach the tree and had covered half the distance when, as we approached a spot where the path was bordered on both sides by dense brushwood, a covey of kaleege pheasants rose out of the brushwood and went screaming away. I knelt down and covered the path for a few minutes, but as nothing happened we went cautiously forward and reached the tree without further incident. As quickly and as silently as possible one goat was tied at the edge of the ravine, while the other was tied at the foot of the hill to the right; then I took the men to the edge of the cultivated land and told them to stay in the upper verandah of the Headman's house until I fetched them, and ran back to the tree. I climbed to

a height of forty feet, and pulled the rifle up after me with a cord I had brought for the purpose. Not only were the two goats visible from my seat, one at a range of seventy and the other at a range of sixty yards, but I could also see part of the buffalo, and as the .275 rifle was very accurate I felt sure I could kill the tigress if she showed up anywhere on the ground I was overlooking.

The two goats had lived together ever since I had purchased them on my previous visit, and, being separated now, were calling lustily to each other. Under normal conditions a goat can be heard at a distance of four hundred yards, but here the conditions were not normal, for the goats were tied on the side of a hill down which a strong wind was blowing, and even if the tigress had moved after I had heard her, it was impossible for her not to hear them. If she was hungry, as I had every reason to believe she was, there was a very good chance of my getting a shot.

After I had been on the tree for ten minutes a *kakar* barked near the spot the pheasants had risen from. For a minute or two my hopes rose sky-high and then dropped back to earth, for the *kakar* barked only three times and ended on a note of inquiry; evidently there was a snake in the scrub which neither he nor the pheasants liked the look of.

My seat was not uncomfortable and the sun was pleasingly warm, so for the next three hours I remained in the tree without any discomfort. At 4 p.m. the sun went down behind the high hill above Thak and thereafter the wind became unbearably cold. For an hour I stood the discomfort, and then decided to give up, for the cold had brought on an attack of ague, and if the tigress came now it would not be possible for me to hit her. I retied the cord to the rifle and let it down, climbed down myself and walked to the edge of the cultivated land to call up my men.

## V

There are few people, I imagine, who have not experienced that feeling of depression that follows failure to accomplish anything they have set out to do. The road back to camp after a strenuous day when the chukor(Hill

partridge.) bag is full is only a step compared with the same road which one plods over, mile after weary mile, when the bag is empty, and if this feeling of depression has ever assailed you at the end of a single day, and when the quarry has only been chukor, you will have some idea of the depth of my depression that evening when, after calling up my men and untying the goats, I set off on my two-mile walk to camp, for my effort had been not of a single day or my quarry a few birds, nor did my failure concern only myself.

Excluding the time spent on the journeys from and to home, I had been on the heels of the man-eater from 23rd October to 7th November, and again from 24th to 30th November, and it is only those of you who have walked in fear of having the teeth of a tiger meet in your throat who will have any idea of the effect on one's nerves of days and weeks of such anticipation.

Then again my quarry was a man-eater, and my failure to shoot it would very gravely affect everyone who was working in, or whose homes were in, that area. Already work in the forests had been stopped, and the entire population of the largest village in the district had abandoned their homes. Bad as the conditions were they would undoubtedly get worse if the man-eater was not killed, for the entire labour force could not afford to stop work indefinitely, nor could the population of surrounding villages afford to abandon their homes and their cultivation as the more prosperous people of Thak had been able to do.

The tigress had long since lost her natural fear of human beings as was abundantly evident from her having carried away a girl picking up mangoes in a field close to where several men were working, killing a woman near the door of her house, dragging a man off a tree in the heart of a village, and, the previous night, cowing a few thousand men into silence. And here was I, who knew full well what the presence of a man-eater meant to the permanent and to the temporary inhabitants and to all the people who passed through the district on their way to the markets at the foot-hills or the temples at Punagiri, plodding down to camp on what I had promised others would be my last day of man-eater hunting; reason enough for a

depression of soul which I felt would remain with me for the rest of my days. Gladly at that moment would I have bartered the success that had attended thirty-two years of man-eater hunting for one unhurried shot at the tigress.

I have told you of some of the attempts I made during this period of seven days and seven nights to get a shot at the tigress, but these were by no means the only attempts I made. I knew that I was being watched and followed, and every time I went through the two miles of jungle between my camp and Thak I tried every trick I have learnt in a lifetime spent in the jungles to outwit the tigress. Bitter though my disappointment was, I felt that my failure was not in any way due to anything I had done or left undone.

## VI

My men when they rejoined me said that, an hour after the *kakar* had barked, they had heard the tigress calling a long way off but were not sure of the direction. Quite evidently the tigress had as little interest in goats as she had in buffaloes, but even so it was unusual for her to have moved at that time of day from a locality in which she was thoroughly at home, unless she had been attracted away by some sound which neither I nor my men had heard; however that may have been, it was quite evident that she had gone, and as there was nothing further that I could do I set off on my weary tramp to camp.

The path, as I have already mentioned, joins the ridge that runs down to Chuka a quarter of a mile from Thak, and when I now got to this spot where the ridge is only a few feet wide and from where a view is obtained of the two great ravines that run down to the Ladhya river, I heard the tigress call once and again across the valley on my left. She was a little above and to the left of Kumaya Chak, and a few hundred yards below the Kot Kindri ridge on which the men working in that area had built themselves grass shelters.



Here was an opportunity, admittedly forlorn and unquestionably desperate, of getting a shot; still it was an opportunity and the last I should ever have, and the question was, whether or not I was justified in taking it.

When I got down from the tree I had one hour in which to get back to camp before dark. Calling up the men, hearing what they had to say, collecting the goats and walking to the ridge had taken about thirty minutes, and judging from the position of the sun which was now casting a red glow on the peaks of the Nepal hills, I calculated I had roughly half an hour's daylight in hand. This time factor, or perhaps it would be more correct to say light factor, was all-important, for if I took the opportunity that offered, on it would depend the lives of five men.

The tigress was a mile away and the intervening ground was densely wooded, strewn over with great rocks and cut up by a number of deep nullahs, but she could cover the distance well within the half-hour— if she wanted to. The question I had to decide was, whether or not I should try to call her up. If I called and she heard me, and came while it was still daylight and gave me a shot, all would be well; on the other hand, if she came and did not give me a shot some of us would not reach camp, for we had nearly two miles to go and the path the whole way ran through heavy jungle, and was bordered in some places by big rocks, and in others by dense brushwood. It was useless to consult the men, for none of them had ever been in a jungle before coming on this trip, so the decision would have to be mine.

I decided to try to call up the tigress.

Handing my rifle over to one of the men I waited until the tigress called again and, cupping my hands round my mouth and filling my lungs to their utmost limit, sent an answering call over the valley. Back came her call and thereafter, for several minutes, call answered call. She would come, had in fact already started, and if she arrived while there was light to shoot by, all the advantages would be on my side, for I had the selecting of the ground on which it would best suit me to meet her. November is the mating season for tigers and it was evident that for the past forty-eight hours she had been

rampaging through the jungles in search of a mate, and that now, on hearing what she thought was a tiger answering her mating call, she would lose no time in joining him.

Four hundred yards down the ridge the path runs for fifty yards across a flat bit of ground. At the far right-hand side of this flat ground the path skirts a big rock and then drops steeply, and continues in a series of hairpin bends, down to the next bend. It was at this rock I decided to meet the tigress, and on my way down to it I called several times to let her know I was changing my position, and also to keep in touch with her.

I want you now to have a clear picture of the ground in your mind, to enable you to follow the subsequent events. Imagine then a rectangular piece of ground forty yards wide and eighty yards long, ending in a more or less perpendicular rock face. The path coming down from Thak runs on to this ground at its short or south end, and after continuing down the centre for twenty-five yards bends to the right and leaves the rectangle on its long or east side. At the point where the path leaves the flat ground there is a rock about four feet high. From a little beyond where the path bends to the right, a ridge of rock, three or four feet high, rises and extends to the north side of the rectangle, where the ground falls away in a perpendicular rock face. On the near or path side of this low ridge there is a dense line of bushes approaching to within ten feet of the four-foot-high rock I have mentioned. The rest of the rectangle is grown over with trees, scattered bushes, and short grass.

It was my intention to lie on the path by the side of the rock and shoot the tigress as she approached me, but when I tried this position I found it would not be possible for me to see her until she was within two or three yards, and further, that she could get at me either round the rock or through the scattered bushes on my left without my seeing her at all. Projecting out of the rock, from the side opposite to that from which I expected the tigress to approach, there was a narrow ledge. By sitting sideways I found I could get a little of my bottom on the ledge, and by putting my left hand flat on the top of the rounded rock and stretching out my right leg to its full extent and

touching the ground with my toes, retain my position on it. The men and goats I placed immediately behind, and ten to twelve feet below me.

The stage was now set for the reception of the tigress, who while these preparations were being made had approached to within three hundred yards. Sending out one final call to give her direction, I looked round to see if my men were all right.

The spectacle these men presented would under other circumstances have been ludicrous, but was here tragic. Sitting in a tight little circle with their knees drawn up and their heads together, with the goats burrowing in under them, they had that look of intense expectancy on their screwed-up features that one sees on the faces of spectators waiting to hear a big gun go off. From the time we had first heard the tigress from the ridge, neither the men nor the goats had made a sound, beyond one suppressed cough. They were probably by now frozen with fear— as well they might be— and even if they were I take my hat off to those four men who had the courage to do what I, had I been in their shoes, would not have dreamt of doing. For seven days they had been hearing the most exaggerated and blood-curdling tales of this fearsome beast that had kept them awake the past two nights, and now, while darkness was coming on, and sitting unarmed in a position where they could see nothing, they were listening to the man-eater drawing nearer and nearer; greater courage, and greater faith, it is not possible to conceive.

The fact that I could not hold my rifle, a D.B. 450/400, with my left hand (which I was using to retain my precarious seat on the ledge) was causing me some uneasiness, for apart from the fear of the rifle slipping on the rounded top of the rock— I had folded my handkerchief and placed the rifle on it to try to prevent this— I did not know what would be the effect of the recoil of a high velocity rifle fired in this position. The rifle was pointing along the path, in which there was a hump, and it was my intention to fire into the tigress's face immediately it appeared over this hump, which was twenty feet from the rock.

The tigress however did not keep to the contour of the hill, which would have brought her out on the path a little beyond the hump, but crossed a deep ravine and came straight towards where she had heard my last call, at an angle which I can best describe as one o'clock. This manoeuvre put the low ridge of rock, over which I could not see, between us. She had located the direction of my last call with great accuracy, but had misjudged the distance, and not finding her prospective mate at the spot she had expected him to be, she was now working herself up into a perfect fury, and you will have some idea of what the fury of a tigress in her condition can be when I tell you that not many miles from my home a tigress on one occasion closed a public road for a whole week, attacking everything that attempted to go along it, including a string of camels, until she was finally joined by a mate.

I know of no sound more liable to fret one's nerves than the calling of an unseen tiger at close range. What effect this appalling sound was having on my men I was frightened to think, and if they had gone screaming down the hill I should not have been at all surprised, for even though I had the heel of a good rifle to my shoulder and the stock against my cheek I felt like screaming myself.

But even more frightening than this continuous calling was the fading out of the light. Another few seconds, ten or fifteen at the most, and it would be too dark to see my sights, and we should then be at the mercy of a man-eater, plus a tigress wanting a mate. Something would have to be done, and done in a hurry if we were not to be massacred, and the only thing I could think of was to call.

The tigress was now so close that I could hear the intake of her breath each time before she called, and as she again filled her lungs, I did the same with mine, and we called simultaneously. The effect was startlingly instantaneous. Without a second's hesitation she came tramping with quick steps through the dead leaves, over the low ridge and into the bushes a little to my right front, and just as I was expecting her to walk right on top of me she stopped, and the next moment the full blast of her deep-throated call struck me in the face and would have carried the hat off my head had I been wearing one. A second's pause, then again quick steps; a glimpse of her as

she passed between two bushes, and then she stepped right out into the open, and, looking into my face, stopped dead.

By great and unexpected good luck the half-dozen steps the tigress took to her right front carried her almost to the exact spot at which my rifle was pointing. Had she continued in the direction in which she was coming before her last call, my story— if written— would have had a different ending, for it would have been as impossible to slew the rifle on the rounded top of the rock as it would have been to lift and fire it with one hand.

Owing to the nearness of the tigress, and the fading light, all that I could see of her was her head. My first bullet caught her under the right eye and the second, fired more by accident than with intent, took her in the throat and she came to rest with her nose against the rock. The recoil from the right barrel loosened my hold on the rock and knocked me off the ledge, and the recoil from the left barrel, fired while I was in the air, brought the rifle up in violent contact with my jaw and sent me heels over head right on top of the men and goats. Once again I take my hat off to those four men for, not knowing but what the tigress was going to land on them next, they caught me as I fell and saved me from injury and my rifle from being broken.



When I had freed myself from the tangle of human and goat legs I took the .275 rifle from the man who was holding it, rammed a clip of cartridges into the magazine and sent a stream of five bullets singing over the valley and across the Sarda into Nepal. Two shots, to the thousands of men in the valley and in the surrounding villages who were anxiously listening for the sound of my rifle, might mean anything, but two shots followed by five more, spaced at regular intervals of five seconds, could only be interpreted as conveying one message, and that was, that the man-eater was dead.

I had not spoken to my men from the time we had first heard the tigress from the ridge. On my telling them now that she was dead and that there was no longer any reason for us to be afraid, they did not appear to be able to take in what I was saying, so I told them to go up and have a look while I found and lit a cigarette. Very cautiously they climbed up to the rock, but went no further for, as I have told you, the tigress was touching the other side of it. Later in camp that night, while sitting round a camp-fire, and relating their experiences to relays of eager listeners, their narrative invariably ended up with, 'and then the tiger whose roaring had turned our livers into water hit the sahib on the head and knocked him down on top of us and if you don't believe us, go and look at his face.' A mirror is superfluous in camp and even if I had one it could not have made the swelling on my jaw, which put me on milk diet for several days, look as large and as painful as it felt.

By the time a sapling had been felled and the tigress lashed to it, lights were beginning to show in the Ladhya valley and in all the surrounding camps and villages. The four men were very anxious to have the honour of carrying the tigress to camp, but the task was beyond them; so I left them and set off for help.

In my three visits to Chuka during the past eight months I had been along this path many times by day and always with a loaded rifle in my hands, and now I was stumbling down in the dark, unarmed, my only anxiety being to avoid a fall. If the greatest happiness one can experience is the sudden cessation of great pain, then the second greatest happiness is undoubtedly the sudden cessation of great fear. One short hour previously it would have

taken wild elephants to have dragged from their homes and camps the men who now, singing and shouting, were converging from every direction, singly and in groups, on the path leading to Thak. Some of the men of this rapidly growing crowd went up the path to help carry in the tigress, while others accompanied me on my way to camp, and would have carried me had I permitted them. Progress was slow, for frequent halts had to be made to allow each group of new arrivals to express their gratitude in their own particular way. This gave the party carrying the tigress time to catch us up, and we entered the village together. I will not attempt to describe the welcome my men and I received, or the scenes I witnessed at Chuka that night, for having lived the greater part of my life in the jungles I have not the ability to paint word-pictures.

A hayrick was dismantled and the tigress laid on it, and an enormous bonfire made from driftwood close at hand to light up the scene and for warmth, for the night was dark and cold with a north wind blowing. Round about midnight my servant, assisted by the Headman of Thak and Kunwar Singh, near whose house I was camped, persuaded the crowd to return to their respective villages and labour camps, telling them they would have ample opportunity of feasting their eyes on the tigress the following day. Before leaving himself, the Headman of Thak told me he would send word in the morning to the people of Thak to return to their village. This he did, and two days later the entire population returned to their homes, and have lived in peace ever since.

After my midnight dinner I sent for Kunwar Singh and told him that in order to reach home on the promised date I should have to start in a few hours, and that he would have to explain to the people in the morning why I had gone. This he promised to do, and I then started to skin the tigress. Skinning a tiger with a pocket-knife is a long job, but it gives one an opportunity of examining the animal that one would otherwise not get, and in the case of man-eaters enables one to ascertain, more or less accurately, the reason for the animal having become a man-eater.

The tigress was a comparatively young animal and in the perfect condition one would expect her to be at the beginning of the mating season.



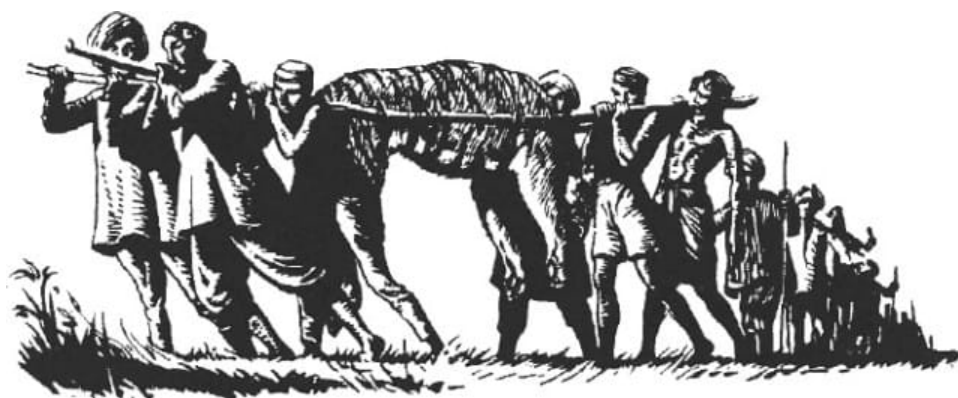
Her dark winter coat was without a blemish, and in spite of her having so persistently refused the meals I had provided for her she was encased in fat. She had two old gunshot wounds, neither of which showed on her skin. The one in her left shoulder, caused by several pellets of homemade buckshot, had become septic, and when healing the skin, over quite a large surface, had adhered permanently to the flesh. To what extent this wound had incapacitated her it would have been difficult to say, but it had evidently taken a very long time to heal, and could quite reasonably have been the cause of her having become a man-eater. The second wound, which was in her right shoulder, had also been caused by a charge of buckshot, but had healed without becoming septic. These two wounds received over kills in the days before she had become a man-eater were quite sufficient reason for her not having returned to the human and other kills I had sat over.

After having skinned the tigress I bathed and dressed, and though my face was swollen and painful and I had twenty miles of rough going before me, I left Chuka walking on air, while the thousands of men in and around the valley were peacefully sleeping.

I have come to the end of the jungle stories I set out to tell you and I have also come near the end of my man-eater hunting career.

I have had a long spell and count myself fortunate in having walked out on my own feet and not been carried out on a cradle in the manner and condition of the man of Thak.

There have been occasions when life has hung by a thread and others when a light purse and disease resulting from exposure and strain have made the going difficult, but for all these occasions I am amply rewarded if my hunting has resulted in saving one human life.



## *Just Tigers*

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I THINK that all sportsmen who have had the opportunity of indulging in the twin sports of shooting tigers with a camera and shooting them with a rifle will agree with me that the difference between these two forms of sport is as great, if not greater, than the taking of a trout on light tackle in a snow-fed mountain stream, and the killing of a fish on a fixed rod on the sun-baked bank of a tank.

Apart from the difference in cost between shooting with a camera and shooting with a rifle, and the beneficial effect it has on our rapidly decreasing stock of tigers, the taking of a good photograph gives far more pleasure to the sportsman than the acquisition of a trophy; and further, while the photograph is of interest to all lovers of wild life, the trophy is only of interest to the individual who acquired it. As an illustration, I would instance Fred Champion. Had Champion shot his tigers with a rifle instead of with a camera his trophies would long since have lost their hair and been consigned to the dustbin, whereas the records made by his camera are a constant source of pleasure to him, and are of interest to sportsmen in all parts of the world.

It was looking at the photographs in Champion's book *With a Camera in Tiger-Land* that first gave me the idea of taking photographs of tigers. Champion's photographs were taken with still camera by flashlight and I decided to go one better and try to take tiger pictures with a ciné-camera by daylight. The gift by a very generous friend of a Bell and Howell 16-mm. camera put just the weapon I needed into my hands, and the 'Freedom of the Forests' which I enjoy enabled me to roam at large over a very wide field. For ten years I stalked through many hundreds of miles of tiger country, at times being seen off by tigers that resented my approaching their kills, and at other times being shooed out of the jungle by tigresses that objected to my going near their cubs. During this period I learnt a little about the habits and ways of tigers, and though I saw tigers on, possibly, two hundred occasions I did not succeed in getting one satisfactory picture.

I exposed films on many occasions, but the results were disappointing owing either to overexposure, underexposure, obstruction of grass or leaves or cobwebs on the lens; and in one case owing to the emulsion on the film having been melted while being processed.

Finally in 1938 I decided to devote the whole winter to making one last effort to get a good picture. Having learnt by experience that it was not possible to get a haphazard picture of a tiger, my first consideration was to find a suitable site, and I eventually selected an open ravine fifty yards wide, with a tiny stream flowing down the centre of it, and flanked on either side by dense tree and scrub jungle. To deaden the sound of my camera when taking pictures at close range I blocked the stream in several places, making miniature waterfalls a few inches high. I then cast round for my tigers, and having located seven, in three widely separated areas, started to draw them a few yards at a time to my jungle studio. This was a long and a difficult job, with many setbacks and disappointments, for the area in which I was operating is heavily shot over, and it was only by keeping my tigers out of sight that I eventually got them to the exact spot where I wanted them. One of the tigers for some reason unknown to me left the day after her arrival, but not before I had taken a picture of her; the other six I kept together and I exposed a thousand feet of film on them. Unfortunately it was one of the wettest winters we have ever had and several hundred feet of the film were ruined through moisture on the lens, underexposure, and packing of the film inside the camera due to hurried and careless threading. But, even so, I have got approximately six hundred feet of film of which I am inordinately proud, for they are a living record of six full grown tigers—four males, two of which are over ten feet, and two females, one of which is a white tigress—filmed in daylight, at ranges varying from ten to sixty feet.

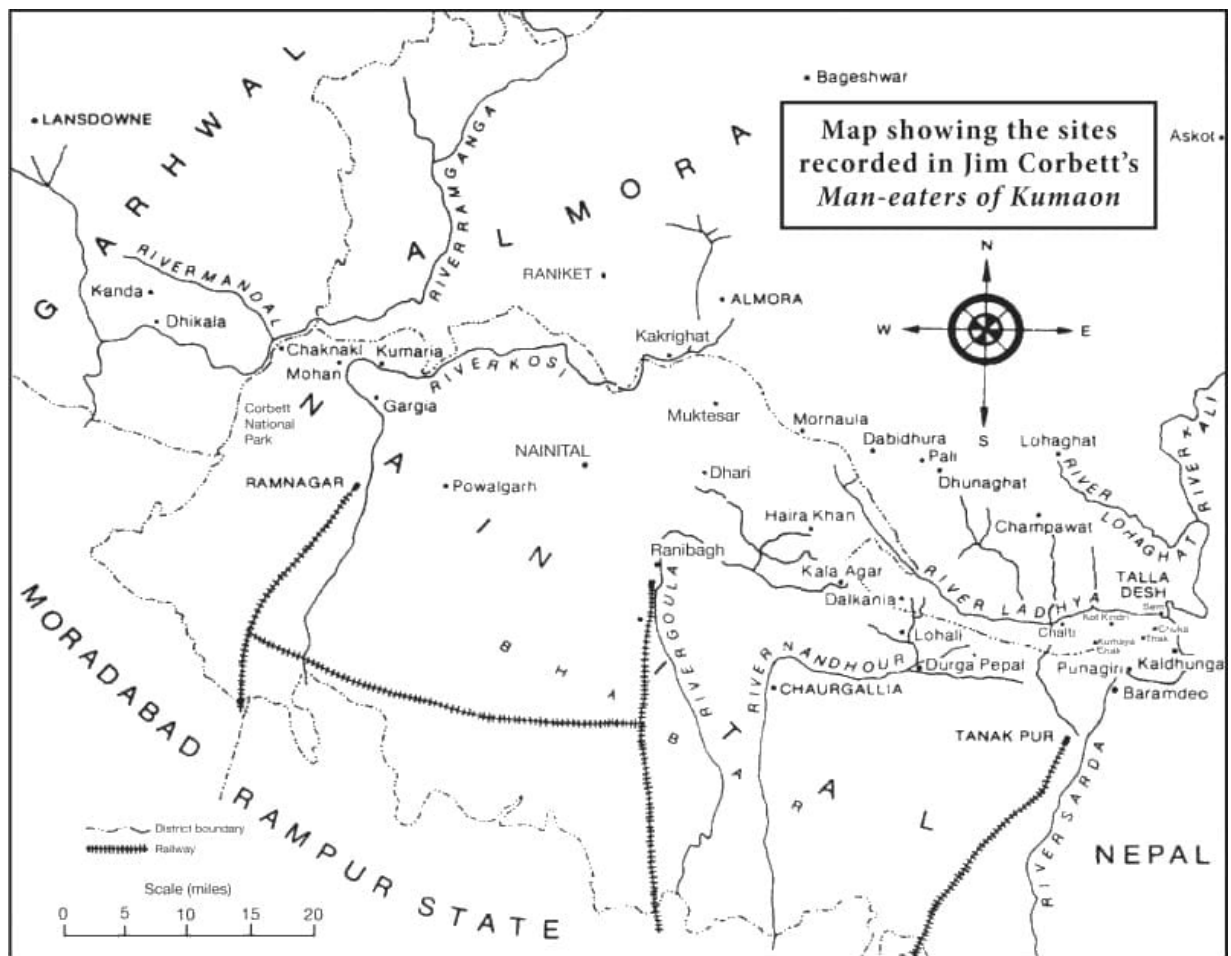
The whole proceeding from start to finish took four and a half months, and during the countless hours I lay near the tiny stream and my miniature waterfalls, not one of the tigers ever saw me.

The stalking to within a few feet of six tigers in daylight would have been an impossible feat, so they were stalked in the very early hours of the

morning, before night had gone and daylight come— the heavy winter dew making this possible— and were filmed as light, and opportunity, offered.

No matter how clear 16-mm. films may appear when projected they do not make good enlargements. However, the accompanying photographs will give some idea of my jungle studio and the size and condition of the subjects I filmed.





# THE TEMPLE TIGER

*And More Man-eaters of Kumaon*



*By*  
JIM CORBETT

*Illustrated by*  
RAYMOND SHEPPARD





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## *The Temple Tiger*

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### 1

**I**T IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR those who have never lived in the upper reaches of the Himalayas to have any conception of the stranglehold that superstition has on the people who inhabit that sparsely populated region. The dividing line between the superstitions of simple uneducated people who live on high mountains, and the beliefs of sophisticated educated people who live at lesser heights, is so faint that it is difficult to determine where the one ends and the other begins. If therefore you are tempted to laugh at the credulity of the actors in the tale I am going to tell, I would ask you to pause for a moment and try to define the difference between superstition as exemplified in my tale, and your beliefs in the faith you have been brought up in.

Shortly after the Kaiser's war, Robert Bellairs and I were on a shooting trip in the interiors of Kumaon and we camped one September evening at the foot of Trisul, where we were informed that 800 goats were sacrificed each year to the demon of Trisul. With us we had fifteen of the keenest and the most cheerful hillmen I have ever been associated with on a shikar. One of these men, Bala Singh, a Garhwali, had been with me for years and had accompanied me on many expeditions. It was his pride and pleasure when on *shikar* to select and carry the heaviest of my loads and, striding at the head of the other men, enliven the march with snatches of song. Around the camp-fire at night the men always sang part-songs before going to sleep, and during that first night, at the foot of Trisul, the singing lasted longer than usual and was accompanied by clapping of hands, shouting, and the beating of tin cans.

It had been our intention to camp at this spot and explore the country around for *baral* and thar, and we were very surprised as we sat down to breakfast next morning to see our men making preparations to strike camp. On asking for an explanation we were told that the site we had camped on was not suitable: that it was damp; that the drinking water was bad; that fuel was difficult to get; and, finally that there was a better site two miles away.

I had six Garhwalis to carry my luggage and I noticed that it was being made up into five head-loads, and that Bala Singh was sitting apart near the camp-fire with a blanket over his head and shoulders. After breakfast I walked over to him, and noted as I did so that all the other men had stopped work and were watching me very intently. Bala Singh saw me coming and made no attempt to greet me, which was very unusual, and to all my questions he returned the one answer—that he was not ill. That day we did our two-mile march in silence, Bala Singh bringing up the rear and moving like a man who was walking in his sleep, or who was under the influence of drugs.

It was now quite apparent that whatever had happened to Bala Singh was affecting the other fourteen men, for they were performing their duties without their usual cheerfulness, and all of them had a strained, and frightened look on their faces. While the 40-lb tent Robert and I shared was

being erected, I took my Garhwali servant Mothi Singh— who had been with me for twenty-five years— aside and demanded to be told what was wrong with Bala Singh. After a lot of hedging and evasive answers I eventually got Mothi Singh's story, which, when it came, was short and direct. 'While we were sitting round the camp-fire last night and singing,' Mothi Singh said, the 'demon of Trisul entered Bala Singh's mouth and he swallowed him'. Mothi Singh went on to say that they had shouted and beaten tin cans to try to drive the demon out of Bala Singh, but that they had not succeeded in doing so, and that now nothing could be done about it.

Bala Singh was sitting apart, with the blanket still draped over his head. He was out of earshot of the other men, so, going over to him, I asked him to tell me what had happened the previous night. For a long minute Bala Singh looked up at me with eyes full of distress, and then in a hopeless tone of voice he said: 'Of what use is it, Sahib, for me to tell you what happened last night, for you will not believe me.' 'Have I ever,' I asked, 'disbelieved you?' 'No,' he said, 'no, you have never disbelieved me, but this is a matter that you will not understand.' 'Whether I understand it or not,' I said, 'I want you to tell me exactly what happened.' After a long silence Bala Singh said: 'Very well, Sahib, I will tell you what happened. You know that in our hill-songs it is customary for one man to sing the verse, and for all the other men present to join in the chorus. Well, while I was singing a verse of one of our songs last night the demon of Trisul jumped into my mouth, and though I tried to eject him, he slipped down my throat into my stomach. The other men saw my struggle with the demon, for the fire was burning brightly, and. they tried to drive him away by shouting and beating tin cans; but,' he added with a sob, 'the demon would not go.' 'Where is the demon now?' I asked. Placing his hand on the pit of his stomach, Bala Singh answered with great conviction, 'He is here, Sahib, here; I can feel him moving about.'

Robert had spent the day prospecting the ground to the west of our camp and had shot a thar, of which he had seen several. After dinner we sat long into the night reviewing the situation. We had planned for, and looked forward to, this shoot for many months. It had taken Robert seven days' and me ten days' hard walking to reach our shooting ground, and on the night of

our arrival Bala Singh had swallowed the demon of Trisul. What our personal opinions were on this subject did not matter, but what did matter was that every man in camp was convinced that Bala Singh had a demon in his stomach, and they were frightened of him and were shunning his company. To carry on a month's shoot under these conditions was not possible, and Robert very reluctantly agreed with me that the only thing to be done was for me to return to Naini Tal with Bala Singh, while he carried on with the shoot alone. So next morning I packed up my things, and after an early breakfast with Robert, set off on my ten-day walk back to Naini Tal.

Bala Singh, a perfect specimen of a man of about thirty years of age, had left Naini Tal full of the joy of life; now he returned silent, with a strained look in his eyes, and with the appearance of one who had lost all interest in life. My sisters, one of whom had been a medical missionary, did all they could for him. Friends from far and near came to visit him, but he just sat at the door of his house, never speaking unless spoken to. The civil surgeon of Naini Tal, Colonel Cooke, a man of great experience and a close friend of the family; came to visit Bala Singh at my request. His verdict after a long and painstaking examination was that Bala Singh was in perfect physical condition, and that he could ascribe no reason for the man's apparent depression.

A few days later I had a brainwave. There was in Naini Tal at that time a very eminent Indian doctor and I thought if I could get him to examine Bala Singh and, after he had done so, tell him about the demon and persuade him to assure Bala Singh that there was no demon in his stomach, he would be able to cure him of his trouble, for in addition to being a Hindu, the doctor was himself a hillman. My brainwave, however, did not work out as I had hoped and anticipated, for as soon as he saw the sick man the doctor appeared to get suspicious and when in reply to some shrewd questions he learnt from Bala Singh that the demon of Trisul was in his stomach, he stepped away from him hurriedly and turning to me said, 'I am sorry you sent for me, for I can do nothing for this man.'

There were two men from Bala Singh's village in Naini Tal. Next day I sent for them. They knew what was wrong with Bala Singh for they had come to see him several times, and at my request they agreed to take him home. Provided with funds the three men started on their eight-day journey next morning. Three weeks later the two men returned and made their report to me.

Bala Singh had accomplished the journey without any trouble. On the night of his arrival home, and while his relatives and friends were gathered around him, he had suddenly announced to the assembly that the demon wanted to be released to return to Trisul, and that the only way this could be accomplished was for him to die. 'So,' my informants concluded, 'Bala Singh just lay down and died, and next morning we assisted at his cremation.'

Superstition, I am convinced, is a mental complaint similar to measles in that it attacks an individual or a community while leaving others immune. I therefore do not claim any credit for not contracting, while living on the upper reaches of the Himalayas, the virulent type of superstition that Bala Singh died of. But though I claim I am not superstitious, I can give no explanation for the experience I met with at the bungalow while hunting the Champawat tiger and the scream I heard coming from the deserted Thak village. Nor can I give any explanation for my repeated failures while engaged in one of the most interesting tiger hunts I have ever indulged in, which I shall now relate.

## 2

No one who has visited Dabidhura is ever likely to forget the view that is to be obtained from the Rest House built near the summit of 'God's Mountain' by one who, quite evidently, was a lover of scenery. From the veranda of the little three-roomed house, the hill falls steeply away to the valley of the Panar river. Beyond this valley, the hills rise ridge upon ridge until they merge into the eternal snows which, until the advent of aircraft, formed an impenetrable barrier between India and her hungry northern neighbours.

A bridle-road running from Naini Hal, the administrative headquarters of Kumaon, to Loharghat, an outlying subdivision on her eastern border, passes through Dabidhura, and a branch of this road connects Dabidhura with Almora. I was hunting the Panar man-eating leopard— about which I shall tell you later— in the vicinity of this latter road when I was informed by a road overseer, on his way to Almora, that the leopard had killed a man at Dabidhura. So to Dabidhura I went.

The western approach to Dabidhura is up one of the steepest roads in Kumaon. The object the man who designed this road had in view was to get to the top by the shortest route possible, and this he accomplished by dispensing with hairpin bends and running his road straight up the face of the eight-thousand-foot mountain. After panting up this road on a hot afternoon in April, I was sitting on the veranda of the Rest House drinking gallons of tea and feasting my



eyes on the breathtaking view, when the priest of Dabidhura came to see me. When two years previously I had been hunting the Champawat man-eater, I had made friends with this frail old man, who officiated at the little temple nestling in the shadow of the great rock that had made Dabidhura a place of pilgrimage, and for whose presence in that unusual place I shall

hazard no guess. When passing the temple a few minutes earlier I had made the customary offering which had been acknowledged by a nod by the old priest who was at his devotions. These devotions finished, the priest crossed the road that runs between the temple and the Rest House and accepting a cigarette sat down on the floor of the veranda with his back against the wall for a comfortable chat. He was a friendly old man with plenty of time on his hands, and as I had done all the walking I wanted to that day, we sat long into the evening chatting and smoking.

From the priest I learnt that I had been misinformed by the road overseer about the man alleged to have been killed at Dabidhura the previous night by the man-eater. The alleged victim, a herdsman on his way from Almora to a village south of Dabidhura, had been the priest's guest the previous night. After the evening meal the herdsman had elected, against the priest's advice, to sleep on the chabutra (platform) of the temple. Round about midnight, when the rock was casting a shadow over the temple, the man-eater crept up and, seizing the man's ankles, attempted to drag him off the platform. Awakening with a yell, the man grabbed a smouldering bit of wood from the nearby fire, and beat off the leopard. His yell brought the priest and several other men to his rescue and the combined force drove the animal away. The man's wounds were not serious, and after they had received rough-and-ready treatment at the hands of the bania, whose shop was near the temple the herdsman continued his journey.



On the evidence of the priest I decided to remain at Dabidhura. The temple and the bania's shop were daily visited by men from the surrounding villages. These men would spread the news of my arrival and—knowing where I was to be found—I would immediately be informed of any kills of human beings, or of animals, that might take place in the area.

As the old priest got up to leave me that evening I asked him if it would be possible for me to get some shooting in the locality, for my men had been without meat for many days and there was none to be purchased at Dabidhura. 'Yes,' he answered,



‘there is the temple tiger.’ On my assuring him that I had no desire to shoot his tiger he rejoined with a laugh, ‘I have no objection, Sahib, to your trying to shoot this tiger, but neither you nor anyone else will ever succeed in killing it.’ And that is how I came to hear of the Dabidhura temple tiger, which provided me with one of the most interesting *shikar* experiences I have ever had.

### 3

The morning following my arrival at Dabidhura I went down the Loharghat road to see if I could find any trace of the man-eater, or learn anything about it in the village adjoining the road, for the leopard was alleged to have gone in that direction after its attack on the man at the temple. On my return to the Rest House for a late lunch I found a man in conversation with my servant. This man informed me he had learnt from the priest that I wanted to do some shooting and he said he could show me a jarao—the hillman’s name for sambhar—with horns as big as the branches of an oak tree. Hill *sambhar* do on occasions grow very fine horns—one had been shot in Kumaon some time previously with horns measuring forty-seven inches—and as a big animal would not only provide my men with meat but would also provide a meat ration for all at Dabidhura, I told the man I would accompany him after lunch.

Some months previously I had been to Calcutta on a short visit, and one morning walked into Manton’s, the gunmaker’s shop. On a glass showcase near the door was a rifle. I was looking at the weapon when the manager, who was an old friend of mine, came up. He informed me that the rifle, a .275 by Westley Richards, was a new model which the makers were anxious to introduce on the Indian market for hill shooting. The rifle was a beauty and the manager had little difficulty in persuading me to buy it on the understanding that if it did not suit me I would be at liberty to return it. So when I set out with my village friend that evening to shoot his jarao with horns as big as the branches of an oak tree, I was carrying my brand-new rifle.

To the south of Dabidhura the hill is less steep than it is to the north and we had proceeded in this direction through oak and scrub jungle for about two miles when we came to a grassy knoll with an extensive view of the valley below. Pointing to a small patch of grass—surrounded by dense jungle—on the left-hand side of the valley, my guide informed me that the jarao came out to graze on this patch of grass morning and evening. He further informed me that there was a footpath on the right-hand side of the valley which he used when on his way to or from Dabidhura, and that it was from this path he was accustomed to seeing the jarao. The rifle I was carrying was sighted to five hundred yards and guaranteed to be dead accurate, and as the distance between the path and the jama's feeding ground appeared to be only about three hundred yards, I decided to go down the path and wait for a shot.



While we had been talking I had noticed some vultures circling to our left front. On drawing my companion's attention to them he informed me there was a small village in a fold of the hill in that direction and suggested that the vultures were possibly interested in some domestic animal that had died in the village. However, he said we would soon know what had attracted the birds, for our way lay through the village. The 'village' consisted of a single grass hut, a cattle shed, and an acre or so of terraced fields from which the crops had recently been cut. In one of these fields, separated from the hut and cattle shed by a ten-foot wide rainwater channel, vultures were tearing the last shreds of flesh from the skeleton of some large animal. A man walked out of the hut as we approached and, after greeting us, asked where I had come from and when I had arrived. On my telling him that I had come from Naini Tal to try to shoot the man-eating leopard and that I had arrived at Dabidhura the previous day, he expressed great regret at not having known of my arrival. 'For you could then,' he said, 'have shot the tiger that killed my cow.' He went on to tell me that he had tethered his fifteen head of cattle in the field, on which the vultures were pulling about the skeleton, the previous night, to fertilize it, and that during the night a tiger had come

and killed one of the cows. He had no firearms and as there was no one within reach to whom he could appeal to shoot the tiger, he had gone to a village where a man lived who had the contract for collecting hides and skins in that area. This man had removed the hide of the cow two hours before my arrival, and the vultures had then carried out their function. When I asked the man whether he had known that there was a tiger in the locality and, if so, why he had tethered his cattle out in the open at night, he surprised me by saying there had always been a tiger on the Dabidhura hill, but that up to the previous night it had never molested cattle.

As I moved away from the hut the man asked me where I was going and when I told him I was going to try to shoot the jarao on the far side of the valley, he begged me to leave the jarao alone for the present and to shoot the tiger. 'My holding is small and the land poor, as you can see,' he said, 'and if the tiger kills my cows, on which I depend for a living, my family and I will starve.'

While we had been talking, a woman had come up the hill with a gharra of water on her head, followed a little later by a girl carrying a bundle of green grass and a boy carrying a bundle of dry sticks: four people living on an acre or so of poor land and a few pints of milk— for hill cattle give little milk— sold to the *bania* at Dabidhura. Little wonder, then, that the man was so anxious for me to shoot the tiger.



The vultures had destroyed the kill. This did not matter, however, for there was no heavy cover near the field where the tiger could have lain up and seen the vultures at their work, so he would be almost certain to return, for he had not been disturbed at his feed the previous night. My guide was also keen on my trying to shoot the tiger in preference to his jarao, so, telling the two men to sit down, I set off to try to find out in which direction the tiger had gone, for there were no trees on which I could sit near the field, and it was my intention to intercept the tiger on its way back. The hill was criss-crossed with cattle paths but the ground

was too hard to show pug marks, and after circling round the village twice I eventually tried the rainwater channel. Here on the soft damp ground I found the pug marks of a big male tiger. These pug-marks showed that the tiger had gone up the channel after his feed, so it was reasonable to assume that he would return the same way. Growing out of the bank, on the same side of the channel as the hut and about thirty yards from it, was a gnarled and stunted oak tree smothered by a wild rose creeper. Laying down the rifle, I stepped from the bank on to the tree, which was leaning out over the channel, and found there was a reasonably comfortable seat on the top of the creeper.

Rejoining the two men at the hut I told them I was going back to the Rest House for my heavy rifle, a double-barrelled .500 express using modified cordite. My guide very sportingly offered to save me this trouble, so after instructing him I sat down with the villager at the door of his hut and listened to the tales he had to tell of a poor but undaunted man's fight against nature and wild animals, to keep a grass roof above his head. When I asked him why he did not leave this isolated place and try to make a living elsewhere, he said simply, 'This is my home.'

The sun was near setting when I saw two men coming down the hill towards the hut. Neither of them had a rifle, but Bala Singh— one of the best men who ever stepped out of Garhwal, and of whose tragic death some years later I have already told you— was carrying a lantern. On reaching me Bala Singh said he had not brought my heavy rifle because the cartridges for it were locked up in my suitcase and I had forgotten to send the key. Well, the tiger would have to be shot with my new rifle, and it could not have a better christening.



Before taking my seat on the tree I told the owner of the hut that my success would depend on his keeping his two children, a girl of eight and a boy of six, quiet, and that his wife would have to defer cooking the evening meal until I had shot the tiger, or until I decided the tiger was not coming.

My instructions to Bala Singh were to keep the inmates of the hut quiet, light the lantern when I whistled, and then await my further orders.

The vesper songs of the multitude of birds in the valley were hushed as the red glow from the setting sun died off the hills. Twilight deepened and a horned owl hooted on the hill above me. There would be a short period of semi-darkness before the moon rose. The time had now come, and the inmates of the hut were as silent as the dead. I was gripping the rifle and straining my eyes on the ground under me when the tiger, who had avoided passing under my tree, arrived at his kill and was angry at what he found. In a low muttering voice he cursed the vultures who, though they had departed two hours earlier, had left their musky smell on the ground they had fouled. For two, three, possibly four minutes he continued to mutter to himself, and then there was silence. The light was getting stronger. Another few minutes and the moon rose over the brow of the hill, flooding my world with light. The bones picked clean by the vultures were showing white in the moonlight, and nowhere was the tiger to be seen. Moistening my lips, which excitement had dried, I gave a low whistle. Bala Singh was on the alert and I heard him ask the owner of the hut for a light from the fire. Through the crevices of the grass hut I saw a glimmer of light, which grew stronger as the lantern was lit. The light moved across the hut and Bala Singh pulled open the door and stood on the threshold awaiting my further orders. With the exception of that one low whistle, I had made no sound or movement from the time I had taken my seat on the tree. And now, when I looked down, there was the tiger standing below me, in brilliant moonlight, looking over his right shoulder at Bala Singh. The distance between the muzzle of my rifle and the tiger's head was about five feet, and the thought flashed through my mind that the cordite would probably singe his hair. The ivory foresight of my rifle was on the exact spot of the tiger's heart— where I knew my bullet would kill him instantaneously— when I gently pressed the trigger. The trigger gave under the pressure, and nothing happened.

Heavens! How incredibly careless I had been. I distinctly remembered having put a clip of five cartridges in the magazine when I took my seat on the tree, but quite evidently when I pushed the bolt home it had failed to convey a cartridge from the magazine into the chamber, and this I had

omitted to observe. Had the rifle been old and worn it might still have been possible to rectify my mistake. But the rifle was new and as I raised the lever to draw back the bolt there was a loud metallic click, and in one bound the tiger was up the bank and out of sight. Turning my head to see how Bala Singh had reacted, I saw him step back into the hut and close the door.

There was now no longer any need for silence and as Bala Singh came up at my call, to help me off the tree, I drew back the bolt of the rifle with the object of unloading the magazine and, as I did so, I noticed that, the extractor at the end of the bolt held a cartridge. So the rifle had been loaded after all and the safety-catch off. Why then had the rifle not fired when I pulled the trigger? Too late, I knew the reason. One of the recommendations stressed by Manton's manager when showing me the rifle was that it had a double pull off. Never having handled a rifle with this so-called improvement, I did not know it was necessary, after the initial pull had taken up the slack, to pull the trigger a second time to release the striker. When I explained the reason for my failure to Bala Singh, he blamed himself, 'for', said he, 'if I had brought your heavy rifle and the suitcase this would not have happened'. I was inclined to agree with him at the time, but as the days went by I was not so sure that even with the heavy rifle I would have been able to kill the tiger that evening.

## 4

Another long walk next morning, to try to get news of the man-eater, and when I returned to the Rest House I was greeted by a very agitated man who informed me that the tiger had just killed one of his cows. He had been grazing his cattle on the far side of the valley from where I sat the previous evening, when a tiger appeared and killed a red cow that had calved a few days previously. 'And now,' he said, 'the heifer calf will die, for none of my other cows are in milk.'

Luck had been with the tiger the previous evening but his luck could not last indefinitely, and for the killing of this cow he would have to die, for

cattle are scarce in the hills and the loss of a milch cow to a poor man was a serious matter. The man had no anxiety about the rest of his small herd, which had stampeded back to his village, so he was willing to wait while I had a meal. At 1 p.m. we set out, the man leading, I on his heels, and two of my men following with material for making a machan.

From an open patch of ground on the hillside my guide pointed out the lay of the land. His cattle had been grazing on a short stretch of grass a quarter of a mile below the ridge, when the tiger, coming up from the direction of the valley, had killed his cow. The rest of the herd had stampeded up the hill and over the ridge to his village, which was on the far side. Our shortest way was across the valley and up the other side, but I did not want to risk disturbing the tiger, so we skirted round the head of the valley to approach from above the spot where the cow had been killed. Between the ridge over which the cattle had stampeded and the spot where they had been grazing, was more or less open tree jungle. The tracks of the running animals had bitten deep into the soft loamy earth, and it was easy to follow these tracks back to where they had started. Here there was a big pool of blood with a drag-mark leading away from it. The drag led across the hill for 200 yards to a deep and well-wooded ravine, with a trickle of water in it. Up this ravine the tiger had taken his kill.

The cow had been killed at about 10 a.m. on open ground, and the tiger's first anxiety would have been to remove it to some secluded spot where it would be hidden from prying eyes. So he had dragged it up the ravine and, after depositing it in a place he knew of, he had, as his pug-marks showed, gone down the ravine into the valley below. In an area in which human beings and cattle are moving about, it is unwise to predict where a tiger will be lying up, for the slightest disturbance may make him change his position. So, though the pug-marks led down the ravine, the three men and I very cautiously followed the drag up the ravine.

Two hundred yards below the ridge along which we had come, rainwater had scooped out a big hole in the hillside. Here the ravine started. The hole, which at the upper end had a sheer drop into it of fifteen feet, had been made many years previously and was now partly overgrown with oak and

ash saplings ten to twelve feet tall. Between these saplings and the fifteen-foot drop was a small open space on which the tiger had deposited his kill. I could sympathize with the owner of the cow when he told me with tears in his eyes that the fine animal that lay dead before us had been bred by him and that it was a special favourite. No portion of the animal had been touched, the tiger having evidently brought it here to eat at his leisure.

A place had now to be found in which to sit. There were several big oak trees on either side of the ravine, but none overlooked the kill and all of them were unclimbable. Thirty yards below the kill and on the left-hand side of the ravine was a small stout holly tree. The branches were growing out at right angles to the trunk, and six feet above ground there was a strong enough branch for me to sit on and another on which to rest my feet. The three men protested strongly against my sitting so close to the ground. However, there was no other suitable place for me to sit, so the holly tree it would have to be. Before sending the men away I instructed them to go to the hut where I had been the previous evening, and to wait there until I called to them, or until I joined them. The distance across the valley was about half a mile and though the men would not be able to see either me or the kill, I was able to see the hut through the leaves of the holly tree.

The men left me at 4 p.m. and I settled down on the holly branch for what I anticipated would be a long wait, for the hill faced west and the tiger would probably not be on the move much before sundown. To the left my field of vision— through the holly leaves— extended down the ravine for fifty yards. In front I had a clear view into the ravine, which was about ten feet deep and twenty feet wide, and of the hill facing me on which there were outcrops of rock but no trees. To the right I had a clear view up to the ridge but I could not see the kill, which was hidden by the thick growth of saplings. Behind me was a dense thicket of ringals which extended down to the level of my tree and further helped to mask the kill. The tiger after depositing his kill in the hole, made by rainwater, had gone down the ravine and it was reasonable to assume that when he returned he would come by the same route. So I concentrated all my attention on the ravine, intending to shoot the tiger when he was at right angles to me. That I could kill him at



that short range I had no doubt whatsoever and to make quite sure of getting in a second shot, if it was necessary, I cocked both hammers of my rifle.



There were sambhar, kakar, and *langur* in the jungle and a great number of pheasants, magpies, babblers, thrushes, and jays, all of which call on seeing a member of the cat family, so I thought I would receive ample warning of the tiger's coming. But here I was wrong, for without having heard a single alarm call, I suddenly heard the tiger at his kill. After going down the ravine, possibly for a drink, the tiger had skirted round the thicket of ringals and approached his kill without passing me. This did not worry me unduly for tigers are restless at a kill in daylight, and I felt sure that sooner or later the tiger would show up on the open ground in front of me. He had been eating for about fifteen minutes, tearing off great chunks of flesh, when I caught sight of a bear coming along the crest of the hill from left to right. He was a great big Himalayan black bear, and was strolling along as though it did not matter to him how long he took to get from here to there. Suddenly he stopped, turned facing downhill, and lay flat. After a minute or two he raised his head, snuffed the wind, and again lay flat. The wind, as always in daylight in the hills, was blowing uphill and the bear had got the scent of flesh and blood, mingled with the scent of tiger. I was a little to the right of the kill, so he had not got my scent. Presently he got to his feet and, with the bent legs and body held close to the ground, started to stalk the tiger.

It was a revelation to me in animal stalking to see that bear coming down the hill. He had possibly two hundred yards to go and though he was not built for stalking, as tigers and leopards are, he covered the distance as smoothly as a snake and as silently as a shadow. The nearer he got the more cautious he became. I could see the lip of the fifteen-foot drop into the hole, and when the bear got to within a few feet of this spot he drew himself along with belly to ground. Waiting until the tiger was eating with great gusto, the bear very slowly projected his head over the lip of the hole and

looked down, and then as slowly drew his head back. Excitement with me had now reached the stage when the whole of my body was trembling, and my mouth and throat were dry.



On two occasions I have seen Himalayan bears walk off with tigers' kills. On both occasions the tigers were not present. And on two occasions I have seen bears walk up to feeding leopards and, after shooing them off, carry the kills away. But on this occasion the tiger— and a big male at that— was present at his kill and, further, he was not an animal to be shooed away like a leopard. At the back of my mind was the thought that surely this bear would not be so foolish as to try to dispossess the king of the jungle of his kill. But that was just what the bear appeared to intend doing, and his opportunity came when the tiger was cracking a bone. Whether the bear had been waiting for this moment I do not know; anyway, while the tiger was crunching the bone, the bear drew himself to the edge and, gathering his feet under him, launched himself into the hole with a mighty scream. The object of the scream I imagine was to intimidate the tiger, but so far from having this effect it appeared to infuriate him, for the bear's mighty scream was answered by an even mightier roar from the tiger.

Fights in the wild are very rare and this is only the second case I know of different species of animals fighting for the sake of fighting and not for the purpose of one using the other as food. I did not see the fight, for the reasons I have given, but I heard every detail of it. Waged in a hollow of restricted area the sound was terrifying and I was thankful that the fight was a straight one between two contestants who were capable of defending themselves, and not a three-cornered one in which I was involved. Time stands still when every drop of blood racing through a rapidly beating heart is tingling with excitement. The fight may have lasted three minutes, or it may have lasted longer. Anyway, when the tiger considered he had



administered sufficient chastisement he broke off the engagement and came along the open ground in front of me at a fast gallop, closely followed by the still screaming bear. Just as I was aligning the sights of my rifle on the tiger's left shoulder he turned sharp to the left and leaping the twenty-foot-wide ravine, landed at my feet. While he was still in the air I depressed the muzzle of the rifle and fired, as I thought, straight into his back. My shot was greeted with an angry grunt as the tiger crashed into the ringals behind me. For a few yards he carried on and then there was silence; shot through the heart and died in his tracks, I thought.



A .500 modified cordite rifle fired anywhere makes a considerable noise, but here, in the ravine, it sounded like a cannon. The detonation, however,

had not the least effect on the maddened bear. Following close on the heels of the tiger he did not attempt to leap the ravine, as the tiger had done. Storming down one bank he came up the other straight towards me. I had no wish to shoot an animal that had the courage to drive a tiger off his kill, but to have let that screaming fury come any nearer would have been madness, so, when he was a few feet from me, I put the bullet of the left barrel into his broad forehead. Slowly he slid down the bank on his stomach, until his haunches met the opposite bank.

Where a moment earlier the jungle had resounded with angry strife and the detonations of a heavy rifle, there was now silence, and when my heart had resumed its normal beat, my thoughts turned to a soothing smoke. Laying the rifle across my knees I put both hands into my pockets to feel for cigarette case and matches. At that moment I caught sight of a movement on my right and, turning my head, saw the tiger unhurriedly cantering along on the open ground over which he had galloped a minute or two earlier and looking not at me, but at his dead enemy.

I know that in relating these events as they occurred, sportsmen will accuse me of rank bad shooting and gross carelessness. I have no defence to make against the accusation of bad shooting, but I do not plead guilty to carelessness. When I fired, as I thought, into the tiger's back, I was convinced I was delivering a fatal wound, and the angry response followed by the mad rush and sudden cessation of sound were ample justification for thinking the tiger had died in his tracks. My second shot had killed the bear outright so there was no necessity— while I was still on the tree— to reload the rifle before laying it across my knees.

Surprise at seeing the tiger alive and unhurt lost me a second or two, and thereafter I acted quickly. The rifle was of the under-lever model; the lever being held in position by two lugs on the trigger guard. This made the rapid loading of the rifle difficult, and, further, the spare cartridges were in my trousers pocket; easy to get at when standing up, but not so easy when sitting on a thin branch. Whether the tiger knew the bear was dead, or whether he was just keeping an eye on it to avoid a flank attack, I do not know. Anyway, he carried on across the face of the steep hill at a slow

canter and had reached a spot forty yards away— which I can best describe as eleven o'clock— and was passing a great slab of rock when, with only one barrel loaded, I put up the rifle and fired. At my shot he reared up, fell over sideways, made a bad landing, scrambled to his feet, and cantered on round the shoulder of the hill with his tail in the air. The nickel-cased soft-nosed bullet with steel base had struck the rock a few inches from the tiger's face and the blow-back had thrown him off his balance but had done him no harm.

After a quiet smoke I stepped down from the holly tree and went to have a look at the bear, who, I found, was even bigger than I had at first thought. His self-sought fight with the tiger had been a very real one, for blood from a number of deep cuts was seeping through the thick fur on his neck and in several places his scalp was torn right down to the bone. These wounds in themselves would have mattered little to a tough animal like a bear, but what did matter and what had annoyed him was the injury to his nose. All males resent being struck on the nose, and not only had the bear been struck on that tender spot but insult had been added to injury by his nose being torn in half. Reason enough for him to have chased the tiger with murder in his eyes, and for him to have ignored the report of my heavy rifle.

There was not sufficient time for me to call up my men to skin the bear, so I set off to collect them at the hut and get back to the Rest House before nightfall, for somewhere in that area there was a man-eater. My men, and the dozen or so villagers who had collected at the hut, were too intent on gazing across the valley to observe my approach, and when I walked in among them, they were dumb with amazement. Bala Singh was the first to recover speech, and when I heard his story I was not surprised that the assembled men had looked at me as one returned from the dead. 'We advised you,' Bala Singh said, 'not to sit so close to the ground, and when we heard your first scream, followed by the tiger's roar, we were convinced that you had been pulled out of the tree and that you were fighting for your life with the tiger. Then, when the tiger stopped roaring and you continued to scream, we thought the tiger was carrying you away. Later we heard two reports from your rifle, followed by a third, and we were greatly mystified, for we could not understand how a man who was being carried away by a

tiger could fire his rifle. And while we were consulting with these men what we should do, you suddenly appeared and we became speechless.' To men keyed-up and listening for sounds from where a tiger was being sat up for, the scream of a bear could easily be mistaken for the scream of a human being, for the two are very similar and at a distance would not be distinguishable from one another.

Bala Singh got a cup of tea ready for me while I told the men about the fight they had heard and about the bear I had shot. Bear's fat is greatly valued as a cure for rheumatism, and the men were delighted when I told them I did not want the fat and that they could share it with their friends. Next morning I set out to skin the bear, accompanied by a crowd of men who were anxious not only to get a share of the fat but also to see the animal that had fought a tiger. I have never measured or weighed a bear but have seen quite a few, and the one I skinned that morning was the biggest and the fattest Himalayan bear I have ever seen. When the fat and the other prized parts of the bear had been divided, a very happy throng of men turned their faces to Dabidhura, and the happiest and the most envied of all was Bala Singh who proudly carried, strapped to his back, the bear's skin I had given him.

The tiger did not return to finish his interrupted meal, and by evening the vultures had picked clean the bones of the cow and the bear.

## 5

Skinning a bear encased in fat is a very messy job, and as I plodded back to the Rest House for a hot bath and a late breakfast I met a very agitated forest guard, whose headquarters were at Dabidhura. He had been at an outlying beat the previous night and on his return to Dabidhura that morning had heard at the bania's shop about the bear I had shot. Being in urgent need of bear's fat for his father, who was crippled with rheumatism, he was hurrying to try to get a share of the fat when he ran into a herd of stampeding cattle, followed by a boy who informed him that a tiger had killed one of his cows. The forest guard had a rough idea where the cattle

had been grazing when attacked by the tiger, so while Bala Singh and the other men carried onto Dabidhura I set off with him to try to find the kill. Uphill and downhill we went for two miles or more until we came to a small valley. It was in this valley that the forest guard thought the cow-had been killed.

There had been an auction of condemned stores at the Gurkha depot at Almora a few days previously, and my companion had treated himself to a pair of army boots many sizes too big for his feet. In these he had clumped ahead of me until we came to the lip of the valley. Here I made him remove his boots and when I saw the condition of his feet I marvelled that a man who had gone barefoot all his life had, for the sake of vanity, endured such torture. 'I bought big boots,' he told me, 'because I thought they would shrink.'

The boat-shaped valley, some five acres in extent, was like a beautiful park dotted over with giant oak trees. On the side from which I approached it the ground sloped gently down and was free of bushes, but on the far side the hill went up more steeply with a few scattered bushes on it. I stood on the lip of the valley for a few minutes scanning every foot of ground in my field of vision without seeing anything suspicious, and then went down the grassy slope followed by the forest guard, now walking silently on bare feet. As I approached the flat ground on the floor of the valley I saw that the dead leaves and dry twigs over a considerable area had been scratched together, and piled into a great heap. Though no part of the cow was visible I knew that under this pile of dead matter the tiger had hidden his kill, and very foolishly I did not inform my companion of this fact, for he told me later that he did not know that tigers were in the habit of hiding their kills. When a tiger hides his kill it is usually an indication that he does not intend lying up near it, but it is not safe to assume this always. So, though I had scanned the ground before entering the valley, I again stood perfectly still while I had another look.

A little beyond the piled-up leaves and twigs the hill went up at an angle of forty-five degrees, and forty yards up the hillside there was a small clump of bushes. As I was looking at these I saw the tiger, who was lying

on a small bit of flat ground with his feet towards me, turn over and present his back to me. I could see part of his head, and a three-inch wide strip of his body from shoulder to hindquarters. A head shot was out of the question, and nothing would be gained by inflicting a flesh wound. I had the whole afternoon and evening before me and as the tiger would be bound to stand up sooner or later, I decided to sit down and wait on events. As I came to this decision I caught sight of a movement on my left, and on turning my head saw a bear coming stealthily up the valley towards the kill, followed by two half-grown cubs. The bear had evidently heard the tiger killing the cow and after giving the tiger time to settle down— as I have done on many occasions— she was now coming to investigate, for unless they have a special reason bears do not move about at midday. Had I been standing on the lip of the valley, instead of a few feet from the kill, I believe I should have witnessed a very interesting sight, for on finding the kill, which with their keen scent they would have had no difficulty in doing, the bears would have started to uncover it. This would have awakened the tiger and I cannot imagine that he would have relinquished his kill without a fight, and the fight would have been worth seeing.

The forest guard, who all this time had been standing quietly behind me seeing nothing but the ground at his feet, now caught sight of the bears and exclaimed in a loud voice, ‘Dekho Sahib, bhalu, bhalu’ . The tiger was up and away in a flash, but he had some twenty yards of open ground to cover, and as I aligned my sights on him and pressed the trigger the forest guard, under the impression that I was facing in the wrong direction, grabbed my arm and gave it a jerk with the result that my bullet struck a tree a few yards from where I was standing. Losing one’s temper anywhere does no good, least of all in a jungle. The forest guard, who did not know what the piled-up leaves implied and who had not seen the tiger, was under the impression that he had saved my life by drawing my attention to the dreaded bears, so there was nothing to be said. Alarmed by my shot the bears lumbered away while my companion urged me with a catch in his throat, ‘Maro, maro!’ (‘Shoot, shoot!’).

A very dejected forest guard walked back with me to Dabidhura, and to cheer him up I asked him if he knew of any place where I could shoot a



ghooral, for my men were still without meat. Not only did the game little man know of such a place but he also volunteered, blisters and all, to take me to it. So after a cup of tea we set off accompanied by two of my men who, the forest guard said, would be needed to carry back the bag.

From the veranda of the Rest House the hill falls steeply away. Down this hill the forest guard led me for a few hundred yards until we came to a foot-wide *ghooral* track running across the face of the hill. I now took the lead and had proceeded for about half a mile to the right when, on coming to a rocky ridge, I looked across a deep ravine and saw a *ghooral* on the far side standing on a projecting rock and looking into space, as all goats including thar, ibex, and markor have a habit of doing. It was a male ghooral, as I could see from the white disk on its throat, and the distance between us was a shade over two hundred yards. Here now was an opportunity not only of procuring meat for my men but also of testing the accuracy of my new rifle. So, lying down, I put up the two hundred-yard leaf sight and, taking very careful aim, fired. At my shot the *ghooral* sank down on the rock on which he had been standing, which was very fortunate, for below him was a sheer drop of many hundred feet. A second ghooral, which I had not seen, now ran up the far side of the ravine followed by a small kid, and after standing still and looking back at us several times, carried on round the shoulder of the hill.

While the forest guard and I had a smoke, my two men set off to retrieve the bag. Deprived of his share of the bear's fat the forest guard was made happy by being promised a bit of the *ghooral* and its skin, which he said he would make into a seat for his father who, owing to age and rheumatism, spent all his days basking in the sun.

## 6

A visit to the valley early next morning confirmed my suspicion that the tiger would not return to his kill, and that the bears would. Little but the bones were left when the three bears had finished with the kill, and that

little was being industriously sought by a solitary king vulture when I arrived on the scene.

The morning was still young so, climbing the hill in the direction in which the tiger had gone the previous day, I went over the ridge and down the far side to the Loharghat road to look for tracks of the man-eating leopard. On my return to the Rest House at midday I was informed of yet another tiger kill. My informant was an intelligent young man who was on his way to Almora to attend a court case and, being unable to spare the time to show me where he had seen the tiger killing a cow, drew a sketch for me on the floor of the veranda with a piece of charcoal. After a combined breakfast and lunch I set out to try to find the kill which— if the young man's sketch was correct— had taken place five miles from where I had fired at the tiger the previous day. The tiger, I found, had come on a small herd of cattle grazing on the banks of the stream flowing down the main valley and, judging from the condition of the soft ground, had experienced some difficulty in pulling down the victim he had selected. Killing a big and vigorous animal weighing six or seven hundred pounds is a strenuous job and a tiger after accomplishing this feat usually takes a breather. On this occasion, however, the tiger had picked up the cow as soon as he had killed it— as the absence of blood indicated— and crossing the stream entered the dense jungle at the foot of the hill.

Yesterday the tiger had covered up his kill at the spot where he had done his killing, but today it appeared to be his intention to remove his kill to as distant a place as possible from the scene of killing. For two miles or more I followed the drag up the steep face of the densely wooded hill to where the tiger, when he had conveyed his heavy burden to within a few hundred yards of the crest, had got one of the cow's hind legs fixed between two oak saplings. With a mighty jerk uphill, the tiger tore the leg off a little below the hock, and leaving that fixed between the saplings went on with his kill. The crest of the hill at the point where the tiger arrived with his kill was flat and overgrown with oak saplings a foot or two feet in girth. Under these trees, where there were no bushes or cover of any kind, the tiger left his kill without making any attempt to cover it up.

I had followed the drag slowly, carrying only my rifle and a few cartridges; even so, when I arrived at the crest my shirt was wet and my throat dry. I could imagine, therefore, the thirst that the tiger must have acquired and his desire to quench it. Being in need of a drink myself I set out to find the nearest water, where there was also a possibility of finding the tiger. The ravine in which I had shot the bear was half a mile to the right and had water in it, but there was another ravine closer to the left and I decided to try that first.

I had gone down this ravine for the best part of a mile and had come to a place where it narrowed with steep shaly banks on either side when, on going round a big rock, I saw the tiger lying in front of me at a range of twenty yards. There was a small pool of water at this spot, and lying on a narrow strip of sand between the pool and the right-hand bank was the tiger. Here the ravine took a sharp turn to the right, and part of the tiger was on my side of the turn and part round the bend. He was lying on his left side with his back to the pool and I could see his tail and part of his hind legs. Between me and the sleeping animal was a great mass of dry branches that had been lopped from overhanging trees some time previously to feed buffaloes. It was not possible to negotiate this obstacle without making a noise, nor was it possible to go along either of the steep banks without causing small landslides of shale. So the only thing to do was to sit down and wait for the tiger to give me a shot.

After his great exertion and a good drink, the tiger was sleeping soundly and for half an hour he made no movement. Then he turned on to his right side and a little more of his legs came into view. In this position he lay for a few minutes and then stood up, and withdrew round the bend. With finger on trigger I waited for him to reappear, for his kill was up the hill behind me. Minutes passed and then a *kakar* a hundred yards away went dashing down the hill barking hysterically, and a little later a *sambhar* belled. The tiger had gone; why, I did not know, for he had already taken as much exercise as any tiger needed to take, and it was not a case of his having scented me, for tigers have no sense of smell. It did not matter, however, for presently he would return to the kill he had been at such pains to take to the top of the hill, and I would be there to receive him. The water in the pool

where the tiger had drunk was ice-cold, and having slaked my thirst I was able to enjoy a long-deferred smoke.

The sun was near setting when I made myself comfortable on an oak tree ten yards to the east and a little to the right of the kill. The tiger would come up the hill from the west and it was not advisable to have the kill directly between us, for tigers have very good eyesight. From my seat on the tree I had a clear view of the valley and of the hills beyond; and when the setting sun, showing as a great ball of fire, was resting on the rim of the earth bathing the world in red, a *sambhar* belled in the valley below me. The tiger was on the move and there was plenty of lime for him to arrive at his kill while there was still sufficient daylight for accurate shooting.

The ball of fire dipped below the horizon; the red glow died of the earth; twilight gave place to darkness; and all was silent in the jungle. The moon was in its third quarter, but the stars — nowhere more brilliant than in the Himalayas— were giving enough light for me to see the kill, which was white. The head of the kill was towards me and if the tiger came now and started to eat at the hindquarters I would not be able to see him, but by aligning my sights on the white kill and then raising the rifle and pressing the trigger, as the kill disappeared from view, there was a fifty-fifty chance of hitting the tiger. But here was no man-eater to be fired at under any conditions. Here was a ‘temple’ tiger who had never molested human beings and who, though he had killed four head of cattle in four consecutive days, had committed no crime against the jungle code. To kill him outright would benefit those who were suffering from his depredations, but to take an uncertain shot at night with the possibility of only wounding him and leaving him to suffer for hours, or if unrecovered to become a man-eater, was not justifiable in any circumstances.

Light was coming in the east, for the boles of the trees were beginning to cast vague shadows, and then the moon rose, flooding the open patches of the jungle with light. It was then that the tiger came. I could not see him but I knew he had come for I could feel and sense his presence. Was he crouching on the far side of the kill with just his eyes and the top of his head raised over the brow of the hill watching me? No, that was not

possible, for from the time I had made myself comfortable on my seat I had become part of the tree and tigers do not go through a jungle scanning, without a reason, every tree they approach. And yet, the tiger was here, and he was looking at me.

There was sufficient light now for me to see clearly, and very carefully I scanned the ground in front of me. Then as I turned my head to the right, to look behind, I saw the tiger. He was sitting on his hunkers in a patch of moonlight, facing the kill, with his head turned looking up at me. When he saw me looking down on him he flattened his ears, and as I made no further movement, his ears regained their upright position. I could imagine him saying to himself, 'Well, you have now seen me, and what are you going to do about it?' There was little I could do about it, for in order to get a shot I would have to turn a half-circle and it would not be possible to do this without alarming the tiger, who was looking at me from a range of fifteen feet. There was, however, just a possibility of my getting a shot from my left shoulder, and this I decided to try to do. The rifle was resting on my knees with the muzzle pointing to the left, and as I lifted it and started turning it to the right the tiger lowered his head and again flattened his ears. In this position he remained as long as I was motionless, but the moment I started to move the rifle again, he was up and away into the shadows behind.

Well, that was that, and the tiger had very definitely won another round. As long as I sat on the tree he would not return, but if I went away he might come back and remove the kill; and as he could not eat a whole cow in a night I would have another chance next day.

The question that now faced me was where to spend the night. I had already walked some twenty miles that day and the prospect of doing another eight miles to the Rest House — through forest all the way— did not appeal to me. In any other locality I would have moved away from the kill for two or three hundred yards and slept peacefully on the ground, but in this locality there was a man-eating leopard, and man-eating leopards hunt at night. While sitting on the tree earlier in the evening, I had heard the distant pealing of cattle-bells, coming either from a village or from a cattle-

station. I had pin-pointed the sound and I now set out to find where it had come from. Cattle-lifting is unknown in the Himalayas, and throughout Kumaon there are communal cattle-stations situated in the jungles close to the grazing grounds. I traced the bells I had heard to one of these stations, in which there were about a hundred head of cattle in a large open shed surrounded by a strong stockade. The fact that the station was in the depth of the jungle, and unguarded, was proof of the honesty of the hillfolk, and it was also proof that until my arrival cattle in the Dabidhura area had not been molested by tigers.

At night all animals in the jungle are suspicious, and if I was to spend the night under the protection of the inmates of the shed I would have to disarm their very natural suspicion. The tenants of our village at Kaladhungi keep about nine hundred head of cows and buffaloes, and having been associated with cattle from my earliest childhood I know the language they understand. Moving very slowly and speaking to the cattle I approached the shed, and on reaching the stockade sat down with my back to it to have a smoke. Several cows were standing near the spot where I sat and one of them now advanced and, putting its head through the bars of the stockade, started to lick the back of my head; a friendly gesture, but a wetting one, and here at an altitude of eight thousand feet the nights were cold. Having finished my cigarette, I unloaded my rifle and, covering it with straw, climbed the stockade.

Care was needed in selecting a place on which to sleep, for if there was an alarm during the night and the cattle started milling round it would be unsafe to be caught on the ground. Near the centre of the shed, and close to one of the roof-supports up which I could go if the need arose, there was an open space between two sleeping cows. Stepping over recumbent animals and moving the heads of standing ones to get past them, I lay down between the two that were lying back to back. There was no alarm during the night, so the necessity for me to shin up the roof-support did not arise, and with the warm bodies of the cows to keep off the night chills and with the honey-sweet smell of healthy cattle in my nostrils I slept as one at peace with all the world, tigers and man-eating leopards included.

The sun was just rising next morning when, on hearing voices, I opened my eyes and saw three men, armed with milking pails, staring at me through the bars of the stockade. The water I had drunk at the tiger's pool was all that had passed my lips since breakfast the previous day, and the warm drink of milk the men gave me— after they had recovered from their amazement at finding me asleep with their cattle— was very welcome. Declining the men's invitation to accompany them back to their village for a meal, I thanked them for their board and lodging and, before returning to the Rest House for a bath and a square meal, set off to see where the tiger had taken his kill. To my surprise I found the kill lying just as I had left it, and after covering it over with branches to protect it from vultures and golden-headed eagles I went on to the Rest House.

In no other part of the world, I imagine, are servants as tolerant of the vagaries of their masters as in India. When I returned to the Rest House after an absence of twenty-four hours, no surprise was expressed, and no questions asked. A hot bath was ready, clean clothes laid out, and within a very short time I was sitting down to a breakfast of porridge, scrambled eggs, hot *chapatis* and honey— the last a present from the old priest— and a dish of tea. Breakfast over, I sat on the grass in front of the Rest House admiring the gorgeous view and making plans. I had set out from my home in Naini Tal with one object, and one object only, to try to shoot the Panar man-eating leopard; and from the night it had tried to drag the herdsman off the temple platform nothing had been heard of it. The priest, the bania, and all the people in near and distant villages that I questioned informed me that there were occasions when for long periods the man-eater seemed to disappear off the face of the earth and they were of the opinion that one of these periods had now started, but no one could say how long it would last. The area over which the man-eater was operating was vast, and in it there were possibly ten to twenty leopards. To find and shoot in that area one particular leopard— that had stopped killing human beings— without knowing where to look for it, was a hopeless job.

My mission as far as the man-eater was concerned had failed, and no useful purpose would be served by my prolonging my stay at Dabidhura. The question of the temple tiger remained. I did not feel that the killing of

this tiger was any responsibility of mine; but I did feel, and felt very strongly, that my pursuit of him was inducing him to kill more cattle than he would otherwise have done. Why a male tiger started killing cattle on the day of my arrival at Dabidhura it was not possible to say, and whether he would stop when I went away remained to be seen. Anyway, I had tried my best to shoot him; had paid compensation for the damage he had done to the full extent of my purse; and he had provided me with one of the most interesting jungle experiences I had ever had. So I harboured no resentment against him for having beaten me at every point in the exciting game we had played during the past four days. These four days had been very strenuous for me, so I would rest today and make an early start next morning on the first stage of my journey back to Naini Tal. I had just come to this decision when a voice from behind me said, 'Salaam, Sahib. I have come to tell you that the tiger has killed one of my cows.' One more chance of shooting the tiger, and whether I succeeded or not I would stick to my plan of leaving next morning.

## 7

Annoyed at the interference of human beings and bears, the tiger had shifted his ground, and this last kill had taken place on the eastern face of the Dabidhura mountain several miles from where I had sat up for him the previous evening. The ground here was undulating, with patches of scrub and a few odd trees dotted here and there; ideal ground for *chukor* (hill partridge), but the last place in which I would have expected to find a tiger. Running diagonally across the face of the mountain was a shallow depression. In this depression were patches of dense scrub, interspersed with open glades of short grass. At the edge of one of these glades the cow had been killed, dragged a few yards towards some bushes, and left in the open. On the opposite or downhill side of the glade to the kill, there was a big oak tree. On this tree, the only one for hundreds of yards around, I decided to sit.

While my men warmed a kettle of water for tea I scouted round to see if I could get a shot at the tiger on foot. The tiger I felt sure was lying up



somewhere in the depression, but though I searched every foot of it for an hour I saw no sign of him.

The tree that was to provide me with a seat was leaning out towards the glade. Excessive lopping had induced a crop of small branches all along the trunk, which made the tree easy to climb but obscured a view of the trunk from above. Twenty feet up, a single big branch jutted out over the glade, offering the only seat on the tree but not a comfortable one or one easy to reach. At 4 p.m. I sent my men away, instructing them to go to a village farther up the hill and wait for me, for I had no intention of sitting up after sun-down.

The kill, as I have said, was lying in the open, ten yards from me and with its hindquarters a yard or so from a dense clump of bushes. I had been in position for an hour and was watching a number of red-whiskered bulbuls feeding on a raspberry bush to my right front, when on turning my eyes to look at the kill I saw the tiger's head projecting beyond the clump of bushes. He was evidently lying down, for his head was close to the ground, and his eyes were fixed on me. Presently a paw was advanced, then another, and then very slowly and with belly to ground the tiger drew himself up to his kill. Here he lay for several minutes without movement. Then, feeling with his mouth, and with his eyes still fixed on me, he bit off the cow's tail, laid it on one side and started to eat. Having eaten nothing since his fight with the bear three days before, he was hungry, and he ate just as a man would eat an apple, ignoring the skin and taking great bites of flesh from the hindquarters.



The rifle was across my knees pointing in the direction of the tiger, and all I had to do was to raise it to my shoulder. I would get an opportunity of doing this when he turned his eyes away from me for a brief moment. But the tiger appeared to know his danger, for without taking his eyes off me he ate on steadily and unhurriedly. When he had consumed about fifteen or twenty pounds of flesh, and when the bulbuls had left the raspberry bush and, joined by two black-throated jays, were making a great chattering on the bushes behind him, I thought it was time for me to act. If I raised the

rifle very slowly he would probably not notice the movement so, when the birds were chattering their loudest, I started to do this. I had raised the muzzle possibly six inches, when the tiger slid backwards as if drawn back by a powerful spring. With rifle to shoulder and elbows on knees I now waited for the tiger to project his head a second time, and this I felt sure he would presently do. Minutes passed, and then I heard the tiger. He had skirted round the bushes and, approaching from behind, started to claw my tree where the thick growth of small branches on the trunk made it impossible for me to see him. Purring with pleasure the tiger once and again clawed the tree with vigour, while I sat on my branch and rocked with silent laughter.

I know that crows and monkeys have a sense of humour, but until that day I did not know that tigers also possessed this sense. Nor did I know that an animal could have the luck, and the impudence, that particular tiger had. In five days he had killed five cows, four of them in broad daylight. In those five days I had seen him eight times and on four occasions I had pressed a trigger on him. And now, after staring at me for half an hour and eating while doing so, he was clawing the tree on which I was sitting and purring to show his contempt of me.

When telling me of the tiger the old priest said, 'I have no objection, Sahib, to your trying to shoot this tiger but neither you nor anyone else will ever succeed in killing it.' The tiger was now, in his own way, confirming what the priest had said. Well, the tiger had made the last move in the exciting game we had played without injury to either of us, but I was not going to give him the satisfaction of having the last laugh. Laying down the rifle and cupping my hands I waited until he stopped clawing, and then sent a full-throated shout echoing over the hills which sent him careening down the hill at full speed and brought my men down from the village at a run. 'We saw the tiger running away with his tail in the air,' the men said when they arrived, 'and just see what he has done to the tree.'

Next morning I bade farewell to all my friends at Dabidhura, and assured them I would return when the man-eater got active again.

I visited Dabidhura several times in subsequent years while hunting man-eaters, and I never heard of anyone having killed the temple tiger. So I hope that in the fullness of time this old warrior, like an old soldier, just faded away.





## *The Muktesar Man-Eater*

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**E**IGHTEEN MILES TO THE NORTH— north-east of Naini Tal is a hill eight thousand feet high and twelve to fifteen miles long, running east and west. The western end of the hill rises steeply and near this end is the Muktesar Veterinary Research Institute, where lymph and vaccines are produced to fight India's cattle diseases. The laboratory and staff quarters are situated on the northern face of the hill and command one of the best views to be had anywhere of the Himalayan snowy range. This range, and all the hills that lie between it and the plains of India, run east and west, and from a commanding point on any of the hills an uninterrupted view can be obtained not only of the snows to the north but also of the hills and valleys to the east and to the west as far as the eye can see. People who have lived at Muktesar claim that it is the most beautiful spot in Kumaon, and that its climate has no equal.

A tiger that thought as highly of the amenities of Muktesar as human beings did, took up her residence in the extensive forests adjoining the small settlement. Here she lived very happily on sambhar, kakar, and wild pig, until she had the misfortune to have an encounter with a porcupine. In this encounter she lost an eye and got some fifty quills, varying in length from one to nine inches, embedded in the arm and under the pad of her right

foreleg. Several of these quills after striking a bone had doubled back in the form of a U, the point and the broken-off end being close together. Suppurating sores formed where she endeavoured to extract the quills with her teeth, and while she was lying up in a thick patch of grass, starving and licking her wounds, a woman selected this particular patch of grass to cut as fodder for her cattle. At first the tigress took no notice, but when the woman had cut the grass right up to where she was lying, the tigress struck once, the blow crushing the woman's skull. Death was instantaneous, for, when found the following day, she was grasping her sickle with one hand and holding a tuft of grass, which she was about to cut when struck, with the other. Leaving the woman lying where she had fallen, the tigress limped off for a distance of over a mile and took refuge in a little hollow under a fallen tree. Two days later a man came to chip firewood off this fallen tree, and the tigress who was lying on the far side killed him also. The man fell across the tree, and as he had removed his coat and shirt and the tigress had clawed his back while killing him, it is possible that the sight of blood trickling down his body as he hung across the bole of the tree first gave her the idea that he was something that she could satisfy her hunger with. However that may be, before leaving him she ate a small portion from his back. A day later she killed her third victim deliberately, and without having received any provocation. Thereafter she became an established man-eater.

I heard of the tigress shortly after she started killing human beings, and as there were a number of sportsmen at Muktesar, all of whom in were keen on bagging the tigress— who was operating right on their doorsteps— I did not consider it would be sporting of an outsider to meddle in the matter. When the toll of human beings killed by the tigress had risen to twenty-four, however, and the lives of all the people living in the settlement and neighbouring villages were endangered and work at the Institute slowed down, the veterinary officer in charge of the Institute requested the Government to solicit my help.

My task, as I saw it, was not going to be an easy one, for, apart from the fact that my experience of man-eaters was very limited, the extensive

ground over which the tigress was operating was not known to me and I therefore had no idea where to look for her.

Accompanied by a servant and two men carrying a roll of bedding and a suitcase, I left Naini Tal at midday and walked ten miles to the Ramgarh Dak Bungalow, where I spent the night. The Dak Bungalow khansama (cook, bottle-washer, and general factotum) was a friend of mine, and when he learnt that I was on my way to Muktesar to try to shoot the man-eater, he warned me to be very careful while negotiating the last two miles into Muktesar for, he said, several people had recently been killed on that stretch of road.

Leaving my men to pack up and follow me I armed myself with a double-barrelled .500 express rifle using modified cordite, and making a very early start next morning arrived at the junction of the Naini Tal / Almora road with the Muktesar road just as it was getting light. From this point it was necessary to walk warily for I was now in the man-eater's country. Before zigzagging up the face of a very steep hill the road runs for some distance over flat ground on which grows the orange-coloured lily, the round hard seeds of which can be used as shot in a muzzle-loading gun. This was the first time I had ever climbed that hill and I was very interested to see the caves, hollowed out by wind, in the sandstone cliffs overhanging the road. In a gale I imagine these caves must produce some very weird sounds, for they are of different sizes and, while some are shallow, others appear to penetrate deep into the sandstone.

Where the road comes out on a saddle of the hill there is a small area of flat ground flanked on the far side by the Muktesar Post Office, and a small bazaar. The post office was not open at that early hour, but one of the shops was and the shopkeeper very kindly gave me directions to the Dak Bungalow which, he said, was half a mile away on the northern face of the hill. There are two Dak Bungalows at Muktesar, one reserved for government officials and the other for the general public. I did not know this and my shopkeeper friend, mistaking me for a government official, possibly because of the size of my hat, directed me to the wrong one and the *khansama* in charge of the bungalow, and I, incurred the displeasure of

the red tape brigade, the *khansama* by providing me with breakfast, and I by partaking of it. However, of this I was at the time happily ignorant, and later I made it my business to see that the *khansama* did not suffer in any way for my mistake.

While I was admiring the superb view of the snowy range, and waiting for breakfast, a party of twelve Europeans passed me carrying service rifles, followed a few minutes later by a sergeant and two men carrying targets and flags. The sergeant, a friendly soul, informed me that the party that had just passed was on its way to the rifle range, and that it was keeping together because of the man-eater. I learnt from the sergeant that the officer in charge of the Institute had received a telegram from the Government the previous day informing him that I was on my way to Muktesar.

The sergeant expressed the hope that I would succeed in shooting the man-eater for, he said, conditions in the settlement had become very difficult. No one even in daylight, dared to move about alone, and after dusk everyone had to remain behind locked doors. Many attempts had been made to shoot the man-eater but it had never returned to any of the kills that had been sat over.

After a very good breakfast I instructed the *khansama* to tell my men when they arrived that I had gone out to try get news of the man-eater, and that I did not know when I would return. Then, picking up my rifle, I went up to the post office to send a telegram to my mother to let her know I had arrived safely.

From the flat ground in front of the post office and the bazaar the southern face of the Muktesar hill falls steeply away, and is cut up by ridges and ravines overgrown with dense brushwood, with a few trees scattered here and there. I was standing on the edge of the hill, looking down into the valley and the well-wooded Ramgarh hills beyond, when I was joined by the Postmaster and several shopkeepers. The Postmaster had dealt with the Government telegram of the previous day, and on seeing my signature on the form I had just handed in, he concluded I was the person referred to in the telegram and his friends and he had now come to offer me their help. I



was very glad of the offer for they were in the best position to see and converse with everyone coming to Muktesar, and as the man-eater was sure to be the main topic of conversation where two or more were gathered together, they would be able to collect information that would be of great value to me. In rural India, the post office and the bania's shop are to village folk what taverns and clubs are to people of other lands, and if information on any particular subject is sought, the post office and the bania's shop are the best places to seek it.

In a fold of the hill to our left front, and about two miles away and a thousand feet below us, was a patch of cultivation. This I was informed was Badri Sah's apple orchard. Badri, son of an old friend of mine, had visited me in Naini Tal some months previously and had offered to put me up in his guest house and to assist me in every way he could to shoot the man-eater. This offer, for the reason already given, I had not accepted. Now, however, as I had come to Muktesar at the request of the Government I decided I would call on Badri and accept his offer to help me, especially as I had just been informed by my companions that the last human kill had taken place in the valley below his orchard.

Thanking all the men who were standing round me, and telling them I would rely on them for further information, I set off down the Dhari road. The day was still young and before calling on Badri there was time to visit some of the villages farther along the hill to the east. There were no milestones along the road, and after I had covered what I considered was about six miles and visited two villages, I turned back. I had retraced my steps for about three miles when I overtook a small girl having difficulties with a bullock. The girl, who was about eight years old, wanted the bullock to go in the direction of Muktesar, while the bullock wanted to go in the opposite direction, and when I arrived on the scene the stage had been reached when neither would do what the other wanted. The bullock was a quiet old beast, and with the girl walking in front holding the rope that was tied round his neck and I walking behind to keep him on the move he gave no further trouble. After we had proceeded a short distance I said:



‘We are not stealing Kalwa, are we?’ I heard her addressing the black bullock by that name.

‘N— — o,’ she answered indignantly, turning her big brown eyes full on me.

‘To whom does he belong?’ I next asked.

‘To my father,’ she said.

‘And where are we taking him?’

‘To my uncle.’

‘And why does uncle want Kalwa?’

‘To plough his field.’

‘But Kalwa can’t plough uncle’s field by himself.’

‘Of course not,’ she said. I was being stupid, but then you could not expect a sahib to know anything about bullocks and ploughing.

‘Has uncle only got one bullock?’ I next asked.

‘Yes,’ she said; ‘he has only got one bullock now, but he did have two.’

‘Where is the other one?’ I asked, thinking that it had probably been sold to satisfy a debt.

‘The tiger killed it yesterday,’ I was told. Here was news indeed, and while I was digesting it we walked on in silence, the girl every now and then looking back at me until she plucked up courage to ask:

‘Have you come to shoot the tiger?’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I have come to try to shoot the tiger.’

‘Then why are you going away from the kill?’

‘Because we are taking Kalwa to uncle.’ My answer appeared to satisfy the girl, and we plodded on. I had got some very useful information, but I wanted more and presently I said:

‘Don’t you know that the tiger is a man-eater?’

‘Oh, yes,’ she said, ‘it ate Kunthi’s father and Bonshi Singh’s mother, and lots of other people.’

‘Then why did your father send you with Kalwa? Why did he not come himself?’

‘Because he has *bhabari bokhar* (malaria).’

‘Have you no brothers?’

‘No. I had a brother but he died long ago.’

‘A mother?’

‘Yes, I have a mother; she is cooking the food.’

‘A sister?’

‘No, I have no sister.’ So on this small girl had devolved the dangerous task of taking her father’s bullock to her uncle, along a road on which men were afraid to walk except when in large parties, and on which in four hours I had not seen another human being.

We had now come to a path up which the girl went, the bullock following, and I bringing up the rear. Presently we came to a field on the far side of which was a small house. As we approached the house the girl called out and told her uncle that she had brought Kalwa.

‘All right,’ a man’s voice answered from the house, ‘tie him to the post, Putli, and go home. I am having my food.’ So we tied Kalwa to the post and went back to the road. Without the connecting link of Kalwa between us, Putli (dolly) was now shy, and as she would not walk by my side I walked ahead, suiting my pace to hers. We walked in silence for some time and then I said:

‘I want to shoot the tiger that killed uncle’s bullock but I don’t know where the kill is. Will you show me?’

‘Oh, yes,’ she said eagerly, ‘I will show you.’

‘Have you seen the kill?’ I asked.

‘No,’ she said, ‘I have not seen it, but I heard uncle telling my father where it was.’

‘Is it close to the road?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Was the bullock alone when it was killed?’

‘No, it was with the village cattle.’

‘Was it killed in the morning or the evening?’

‘It was killed in the morning when it was going out to graze with the cows.’

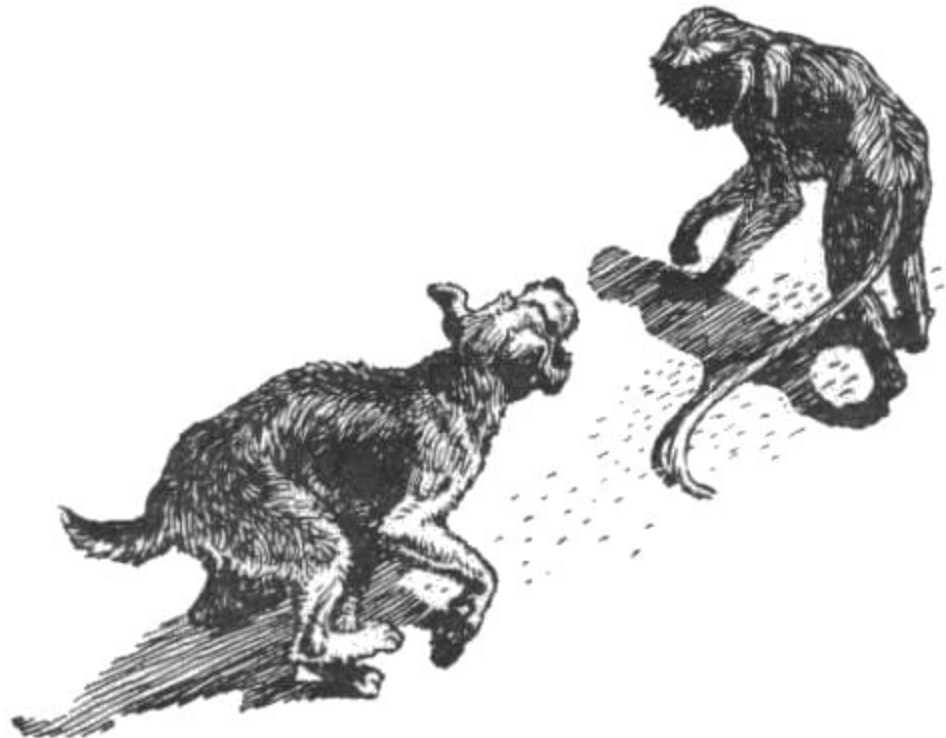
While talking to the girl I was keeping a sharp look-out all round, for the road was bordered on the left by heavy tree jungle, and on the right by dense scrub. We had proceeded for about a mile when we came to a well-used cattle track leading off into the jungle on the left. Here the girl stopped and said it was on this track that her uncle had told her father the bullock had been killed. I had now got all the particulars I needed to enable me to find the kill, and after seeing the girl safely to her home I returned to the cattle track. This track ran across a valley and I had gone along it for about a quarter of a mile when I came upon a spot where cattle had stampeded. Leaving the track, I now went through the jungle, parallel to and about fifty yards below the track. I had only gone a short distance when I came on a drag-mark. This drag-mark went straight down into the valley, and after I had followed it for a few hundred yards I found the bullock, from which only a small portion of the hindquarters had been eaten. It was lying at the foot of a bank about twenty feet high, and some forty feet from the head of a deep ravine. Between the ravine and the kill was a stunted tree, smothered over by a wild rose. This was the only tree within a reasonable distance of the kill on which I could sit with any hope of bagging the tiger, for there was no moon, and if the tiger came after dark—as I felt sure it would—the nearer I was to the kill the better would be my chance of killing the tiger.

It was now 2 p.m. and there was just time for me to call on Badri and ask him for a cup of tea, of which I was in need for I had done a lot of walking since leaving Ramgarh at four o’clock that morning. The road to Badri’s orchard takes off close to where the cattle track joins the road, and runs down a steep hill for a mile through dense brushwood. Badri was near his guest house, attending to a damaged apple tree when I arrived, and on hearing the reason for my visit he took me up the guest house which was on a little knoll overlooking the orchard. While we sat on the veranda waiting

for the tea and something to eat that Badri had ordered his servant to prepare for me, I told him why I had come to Muktesar, and about the kill the young girl had enabled me to find. When I asked Badri why this kill had not been reported to the sportsmen at Muktesar, he said that owing to the repeated failures of the sportsmen to bag the tiger the village folk had lost confidence in them, and for this reason kills were no longer being reported to them. Badri attributed the failures to the elaborate preparations that had been made to sit over kills. These preparations consisted of clearing the ground near the kills of all abstractions in the way of bushes and small trees, the building of big machans, and the occupation of the machans by several men. Reasons enough for the reputation the tiger had earned of never returning to a kill. Badri was convinced that there was only one tiger in Muktesar district and that it was slightly lame in its right foreleg, but he did not know what had caused the lameness, nor did he know whether the animal was male or female.

Sitting on the veranda with us was a big Airedale terrier.

Presently the dog started growling, and looking in the direction in which the dog was facing, we saw a big *langur* sitting on the ground and holding down the



branch of an apple tree, and eating the unripe fruit. Picking up a shotgun that was leaning against the railing of the veranda, Badri loaded it with No. 4 shot and fired. The range was too great for the pellets, assuming any hit it,

to do the *langur* any harm, but the shot had the effect of making it canter up the hill with the dog in hot pursuit. Frightened that the dog might come to grief, I asked Badri to call it back, but he said it would be all right for the dog was always chasing this particular animal, which he said had done a lot of damage to his young trees. The dog was now gaining on the langur, and when it got to within a few yards the langur whipped round, got the dog by the ears, and bit a lump off the side of its head. The wound was a very severe one, and by the time we had finished attending to it my tea and a plate of hot *puris* (unleavened bread fried in butter) was ready for me.

I had told Badri about the tree I intended sitting on, and when I returned to the kill he insisted on going with me accompanied by two men carrying materials for making a small *machan*. Badri and the two men had lived under the shadow of the man-eater for over a year and had no illusions about it, and when they saw that there were no trees near the kill— with the exception of the one I had selected— in which a *machan* could be built, they urged me not to sit up that night, on the assumption that the tiger would remove the kill and provide me with a more suitable place to sit up the following night. This was what I myself would have done if the tiger had not been a man-eater, but as it was I was disinclined to miss a chance which might not recur on the morrow, even if it entailed a little risk. There were bears in this forest and if one of them smelt the kill, any hope I had of getting a shot at the tiger would vanish, for Himalayan bears are no respecters of tigers and do not hesitate to appropriate their kills. Climbing into the tree, smothered as it was by the rose bush, was a difficult feat, and after I had made myself as comfortable as the thorn permitted and my rifle had been handed up to me Badri and his men left, promising to return early next morning.

I was facing the hill, with the ravine behind me. I was in clear view of any animal coming down from above, but if the tiger came from below, as I expected, it would not see me until it got to the kill. The bullock, which was white, was lying on its right side with its legs towards me, and at a distance of about fifteen feet. I had taken my seat at 4 p.m. and an hour later a *kakar* started barking on the side of the ravine two hundred yards below me. The tiger was on the move, and having seen it the *kakar* was standing still and

barking. For a long time it barked and then it started to move away, the bark growing fainter and fainter until the sound died away round the shoulder of the hill. This indicated that after coming within sight of the kill, the tiger had lain down. I had expected this to happen after having been told by Badri the reasons for the failures to shoot the tiger over a kill. I knew the tiger would now be lying somewhere nearby with his eyes and ears open, to make quite sure there were no human beings near the kill, before he approached it. Minute succeeded long minute; dusk came; objects on the hill in front of me became indistinct and then faded out. I could still see the kill as a white blur when a stick snapped at the head of the ravine and stealthy steps came towards me, and then stopped immediately below. For a minute or two there was dead silence, and then the tiger lay down on the dry leaves at the foot of the tree.



Heavy clouds had rolled up near sunset and there was now a black canopy overhead blotting out the stars. When the tiger eventually got up and went to the kill, the night could best be described as pitch black. Strain my eyes as I would, I could see nothing of the white bullock, and still less of the tiger. On reaching the kill the tiger started blowing on it. In the Himalayas, and especially in the summer, kills attract hornets, most of which leave as the light fades but those that are too torpid to fly remain, and a tiger— possibly after bitter experience— blows off the hornets adhering to the exposed portion of the flesh before starting to feed. There was no need for me to hurry over my shot for, close though it was, the tiger would not see me, unless I attracted its attention by some movement or sound. I can see reasonably well on a dark night by the light of the stars, but there were no stars visible that night nor was there a flicker of lightning in the heavy clouds. The tiger had not moved the kill before starting to eat, so I knew he was lying broadside on to me, on the right-hand side of the kill.

Owing to the attempts that had been made to shoot the tiger I had suspicion that it would not come before dark, and it had been my intention to take what aim I could— by the light of the stars— and then move the muzzle of my rifle sufficiently for my bullet to go a foot or two to the right



of the kill. But now that the clouds had rendered my eyes useless, I would have to depend on my ears (my hearing at that time was perfect). Raising the rifle and resting my elbows on my knees, I took careful aim at the sound the tiger was making, and while holding the rifle steady, turned my right ear to the sound, and then back again. My aim was a little too high, so, lowering the muzzle a fraction of an inch, I again turned my head and listened. After I had done this a few times and satisfied myself that I was pointing at the sound, I moved the muzzle a little to the right and pressed the trigger. In two bounds the tiger was up the twenty-foot bank. At the top there was a small bit of flat ground, beyond which the hill went up steeply. I heard the tiger on the dry leaves as far as the flat ground, and then there was silence. This silence could be interpreted to mean either that the tiger had died on reaching the flat ground or that it was unwounded. Keeping the rifle to my shoulder I listened intently for three or four minutes, and as there was no further sound I lowered the rifle. This movement was greeted by a deep growl from the top of the bank. So the tiger was unwounded, and had seen me. My seat on the tree had originally been about ten feet up but, as I had nothing solid to sit on, the rose bush had sagged under my weight and I was now possibly no more than eight feet above ground, with my dangling feet considerably lower. And a little above and some twenty feet from me a tiger that I had every reason to believe was a man-eater was growling deep down in his throat.



The near proximity of a tiger in daylight, even when it has not seen you, causes a disturbance in the blood stream. When the tiger is not an ordinary one, however, but a man-eater and the time is ten o'clock on a dark night, and you know the man-eater is watching you, the disturbance in the blood stream becomes a storm. I maintain that a tiger does not kill beyond its requirements, except under provocation. The tiger that was growling at me already, had a kill that would last it for two or three days, and there was no necessity for it to kill me. Even so, I had an uneasy feeling that on this occasion this particular tiger might prove an exception to the rule. Tigers will at times return to a kill after

being fired at, but I knew this one would not do so. I also knew that in spite of my uneasy feeling I was perfectly safe so long as I did not lose my balance—I had nothing to hold on to—or go to sleep and fall off the tree. There was no longer any reason for me to deny myself a smoke, so I took out my cigarette case and as I lit a match I heard the tiger move away from the edge of the bank. Presently it came back and again growled. I had smoked three cigarettes, and the tiger was still with me, when it came on to rain. A few big drops at first and then a heavy downpour. I had put on light clothes when I started from Ramgarh that morning and in a few minutes I was wet to the skin, for there was not a leaf above me to diffuse the raindrops. The tiger, I knew, would have hurried off to shelter under a tree or on the lee of a rock the moment the rain started. The rain came on at 11 p.m.; at 4 a.m. it stopped and the sky cleared. A wind now started to blow, to add in my discomfort, and where I had been cold before I was now frozen. When I get a twinge of rheumatism I remember that night and others like it, and am thankful that it is no more than a twinge.

Badri, good friend that he was, arrived with a man carrying a kettle of hot tea just as the sun was rising. Relieving me of my rifle the two men caught me as I slid off the tree, for my legs were too cramped to function. Then as I lay on the ground and drank the tea they massaged my legs and restored circulation. When I was able to stand, Badri sent his man off to light a fire in the guest house. I had never previously used my ears to direct a bullet and was interested to find that I had missed the tiger's head by only a few inches. The elevation had been all right but I had not moved the muzzle of the rifle far enough to the right, with the result that my bullet had struck the bullock six inches from where the tiger was eating.

The tea and the half-mile walk up to the road took all the creases out of me, and when we started down the mile-long track to Badri's orchard, wet clothes and an empty stomach were my only discomfort. The track ran over red clay which the rain had made very slippery. In this clay were three tracks: Badri's and his man's tracks going up, and the man's tracks going down. For fifty yards there were only these three tracks in the wet clay, and then, where there was a bend in the track, a tigress had jumped down from the bank on the right and gone down the track on the heels of Badri's man.

The footprints of the man and the pug-marks of the tigress showed that both had been travelling at a fast pace. There was nothing that Badri and I could do, for the man had a twenty-minute start from us, and if he had not reached the safety of the orchard he would long have been beyond any help we could give him. With uneasy thoughts assailing us, we made what speed



we could on the slippery ground and were very relieved to find, on coming to a footpath from where the orchard and a number of men working in it were visible, that the tigress had gone down the path while the man had carried on to the orchard. Questioned later, the man said he did not know that he had been followed by the tigress.

While drying my clothes in front of a roaring wood-fire in the guest house, I questioned Badri about the jungle into which the tigress had gone. The path which the tigress had taken, Badri told me, ran down into a deep and densely wooded ravine which extended down the face of a very steep hill, for a mile or more, to where it was met by another ravine coming down from the right. At the junction of the two ravines there was a stream and here there was an open patch of ground which, Badri said, commanded the exit of both ravines. Badri was of the opinion that the tigress would lie up for the day in the ravine into which we had every reason to believe she had gone, and as this appeared to be an ideal place for a beat, we decided to try this method of getting a shot at the tigress, provided we could muster sufficient men to carry out the beat. Govind Singh, Badri's head gardener, was summoned and our plan explained to him. Given until midday, Govind Singh said he could muster a gang of thirty men to do the beat, and in addition carry out his master's orders to gather five maunds (four hundred and ten pounds) of peas. Badri had an extensive vegetable garden in addition to his apple orchard and the previous evening he had received a telegram informing him that the price of marrowfat peas on the Naini Tal market had jumped to four annas (four pence) a pound. Badri was anxious to take advantage of this good price and his men were gathering the peas to

be dispatched by pack pony that night, to arrive in Naini Tal for the early morning market.



After cleaning my rifle and walking round the orchard, I joined Badri at his morning meal — which had been put forward an hour to suit me— and at midday Govind produced his gang of thirty men. It was essential for someone to supervise the pea-pickers, so Badri decided to remain and send Govind to carry out the beat. Govind and the thirty men were local residents and knew the danger to be apprehended from the man-eater. However, after I had told them what I wanted them to do, they expressed their willingness to carry out my instructions. Badri was to give me an hour's start to enable me to search the ravine for the tigress and, if I failed to get a shot, to take up my position on the open ground near the stream. Govind was to divide his men into two parties, take charge of one party himself, and put a reliable man in charge of the other. At the end of the hour Badri was to fire a shot and the two parties were to set off, one on

either side of the ravine, rolling rocks down, and shouting and clapping their hands. It all sounded as simple as that, but I had my doubts, for I have seen many beats go wrong.

Going up the track down which I had come that morning, I followed the path that the tigress had taken, only to find after I had gone a short distance that it petered out in a vast expanse of dense brushwood. Forcing my way through for several hundred yards I found that the hillside was cut up by a series of deep ravines and ridges. Going down a ridge which I thought was the right-hand boundary of the ravine to be beaten, I came to a big drop at the bottom of which the ravine on my left met a ravine coming down from the right, and at the junction of the two ravines there was a stream. While I

was looking down and wondering where the open ground was on which I was to take my stand, I heard flies buzzing near me and on following the sound found the remains of a cow that had been killed about a week before. The marks on the animal's throat showed that it had been killed by a tiger. The tiger had eaten all of the cow, except a portion of the shoulders, and the neck and head. Without having any particular reason for doing so, I dragged the carcass to the edge and sent it crashing down the steep hill. After rolling for about a hundred yards the carcass fetched up in a little hollow a short distance from the stream. Working round to the left I found an open patch of ground on a ridge about three hundred yards from the hollow into which I had rolled the remains of the cow. The ground down here was very different from what I had pictured it to be. There was no place where I could stand to overlook the hillside that was to be beaten, and the tigress might break out anywhere without my seeing her. However, it was then too late to do anything, for Badri had fired the shot that was to let me know the beat had started. Presently, away in the distance, I heard men shouting. For a time I thought the beat was coming my way and then the sounds grew fainter and fainter until they eventually died away. An hour later I again heard the beaters. They were coming down the hill to my right, and when they were on a level with me I shouted to them to stop the beat and join me on the ridge. It was no one's fault that the beat had miscarried, for without knowing the ground and without previous preparation we had tried to beat with a handful of untrained men a vast area of dense brushwood that hundreds of trained men would have found difficult to cope with.

The beaters had had a very strenuous time forcing their way through the brushwood, and while they sat in a bunch removing thorns from their hands and feet and smoking my cigarettes, Govind and I stood facing each other, discussing his suggestion of carrying out a beat on the morrow in which every available man in Muktesar and the surrounding villages would take part. Suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, Govind stopped talking. I could see that something unusual had attracted his attention behind me, for his eyes narrowed and a look of incredulity came over his face. Swinging round I looked in the direction in which he was facing, and there, quietly walking along a field that had gone out of cultivation, was the tigress. She was about

four hundred yards away on the hill on the far side of the stream, and was coming towards us.

When a tiger is approaching you in the forest— even when you are far from human habitations— thoughts course through your mind of the many things that can go wrong to spoil your chance of getting the shot, or the photograph, you are hoping for. On one occasion I was sitting on a hillside overlooking a game track, waiting for a tiger. The track led to a very sacred jungle shrine known as Baram ka Than. Baram is a jungle God who protects human beings and does not permit the shooting of animals in the area he watches over. The forest in the heart of which this shrine is situated is well stocked with game and is a favourite hunting ground of poachers for miles around, and of sportsmen from all parts of India. Yet, in a lifetime's acquaintance with that forest, I do not know of a single instance of an animal having been shot in the vicinity of the shrine. When therefore I set out that day to shoot a tiger that had been taking toll of our village buffaloes, I selected a spot a mile from Baram's shrine. I was in position, behind a bush, at 4 p.m. and an hour later a *sambhar* belled in the direction from which I was expecting the tiger. A little later and a little nearer to me a *kakar* started barking; the tiger was coming along the track near which I was sitting. The jungle was fairly open and consisted mostly of young *jamun* trees, two to three feet in girth. I caught sight of the tiger— a big male— when he was two hundred yards away. He was coming slowly and had reduced the distance between us to a hundred yards when I heard the swish of leaves, and on looking up saw that one of the *jamun* trees whose branches were interlaced with another was beginning to lean over. Very slowly the tree heeled over until it came in contact with another tree of the same species and of about the same size. For a few moments the second tree supported the weight of the first and then it, too, started to keel over. When the two trees were at an angle of about thirty degrees from the perpendicular, they fetched up against a third and smaller tree. For a moment or two there was a pause, and then all three trees crashed to the ground. While watching the trees, which were only a few yards from me, I had kept an eye on the tiger. At the first sound of the leaves he had come to a halt and when the trees crashed to the ground he turned and, without showing any sign of alarm, went back in the direction from which he had

come. What made the occurrence I had witnessed so unusual was that the trees were young and vigorous; that no rain had fallen recently to loosen their roots; that not a breath of air was stirring in the forest; and, finally, that the trees had fallen across the track leading to the shrine when the tiger had only another seventy yards to cover to give me the shot I was waiting for.

The chances of a shot being spoilt are greatly increased when the quarry is in an inhabited area in which parties of men may be travelling from one village to another or going to or from markets, or where shots may be fired to scare away langurs from apple orchards. The tigress still had three hundred yards to go to reach the stream, and two hundred yards of that was over open ground on which there was not a single tree or bush. The tigress was coming towards us at a slight angle and would see any movement we made, so there was nothing I could do but watch her, and no tigress had ever moved more slowly. She was known to the people of Muktesar as the lame tiger, but I could see no sign of her being lame. The plan that was forming in my head as I watched her was to wait until she entered the scrub jungle, and then run forward and try to get a shot at her either before or after she crossed the stream. Had there been sufficient cover between me and the point the tigress was making for, I would have gone forward as soon as I saw her and tried either to get a shot at her on the open ground or, failing that, to intercept her at the stream. But unfortunately there was not sufficient cover to mask my movements, so I had to wait until the tigress entered the bushes between the open ground and the stream. Telling the men not to move or make a sound until I returned, I set off at a run as the tigress disappeared from view. The hill was steep and as I ran along the contour I came to a wild rose bush which extended up and down the hill for many yards. Through the middle of the bush there was a low tunnel, and as I bent down to run through it my hat was knocked off, and raising my head too soon at the end of the tunnel I was nearly dragged off my feet by the thorns that entered my head. The thorns of these wild roses are curved and very strong and as I was not able to stop myself some embedded themselves and broke off in my head— where my sister Maggie had difficulty in removing them when I got home— while others tore through the flesh. With little trickles of blood running down my face I continued to run until I approached the hollow into which I had rolled the partly eaten kill from the

hill above. This hollow was about forty yards long and thirty yards wide. The upper end of it where the kill was lying, the hill above the kill, and the further bank, were overgrown with dense brushwood. The lower half of the hollow and the bank on my side were free of bushes. As I reached the edge of the hollow and peered over, I heard a bone crack. The tigress had reached the hollow before me and, on finding the old kill, was trying to make up for the meal she had been deprived of the previous night.

If after leaving the kill, on which there was very little flesh, the tigress came out on to the open ground I would get a shot at her, but if she went up the hill or up the far bank I would not see her. From the dense brushwood in which I could hear the tigress, a narrow path ran up the bank on my side and paused within a yard to my left; a yard beyond the path, there was a sheer drop of fifty feet into the stream below. I was considering the possibility of driving the tigress out of the brushwood on to the open ground by throwing a stone on to the hill above her, when I heard a sound behind me. On looking round I saw Govind standing behind me with my hat in his hand. At that time no European in India went about without a hat, and having seen mine knocked off by the rose bush Govind had retrieved it and brought it to me. Near us there was a hole in the hill. Putting my finger to my lips I got Govind by the arm and pressed him into the hole. Sitting on his hunkers with his chin resting on his drawn-up knees, hugging my hat, he just fitted into the hole and looked a very miserable object, for he could hear the tigress crunching bones a few yards away. As I straightened up and resumed my position on the edge of the bank, the tigress stopped eating. She had either seen me or, what was more probable, she had not found the old kill to her liking. For a long minute there was no movement or sound, and then I caught sight of her. She had climbed up the opposite bank, and was now going along the top of it towards the hill. At this point there were a number of six-inch-thick poplar saplings, and I could only see the outline of the tigress as she went through them. With the forlorn hope that my bullet would miss the saplings and find the tigress I threw up my rifle and took a hurried shot. At my shot the tigress whipped round, came down the bank, across the hollow, and up the path on my side, as hard as she could go. I did not know, at the time, that my bullet had struck a sapling near her head, and that she was blind of one eye. So what looked like a very determined charge



might only have been a frightened animal running away from danger, for in that restricted space she would not have known from which direction the report of my rifle had come. Be that as it may, what I took to be a wounded and a very angry tigress was coming straight at me; so, waiting until she was two yards away, I leant forward and with great good luck managed to put the remaining bullet in the rifle into the hollow where her neck joined her shoulder. The impact of the heavy .500 bullet deflected her just sufficiently for her to miss my left shoulder, and her impetus carried her over the fifty-foot drop into the stream below, where she landed with a great splash. Taking a step forward I looked over the edge and saw the tigress lying submerged in a pool with her feet in the air, while the water in the pool reddened with her blood.



Govind was still sitting in the hole, and at a sign he joined me. On seeing the tigress he turned and shouted to the men on the ridge, 'The tiger is dead. The tiger is dead.' The thirty men on the ridge now started shouting, and Badri on hearing them got hold of his shot gun and fired off ten rounds. These shots were heard at Muktesar and in the surrounding villages, and presently men from all sides were converging on the stream. Willing hands drew the tigress from the pool, lashed her to a sapling, and carried her in triumph to Badri's orchard. Here she was put down on a bed of straw for all to see, while I went to the guest house for a cup of tea. An hour later by the light of hand lanterns, and with a great crowd of men standing round, among whom were several sportsmen from Muktesar, I skinned the tigress. It was then that I found she was blind of one eye and that she had some fifty porcupine quills, varying in length from one to nine inches, embedded in the arm and under the pad of her right foreleg. By ten o'clock my job was finished, and declining Badri's very kind invitation to spend the night with him I climbed the hill in company with the people who had come down from Muktesar, among whom were my two men carrying the skin. On the open ground in front of the post office the skin was spread out for the Postmaster and his friends to see. At midnight I lay down in the Dak Bungalow reserved for the public, for a few hours' sleep. Four hours later I was on the move again and at midday I was back in my home at Naini Tal after an absence of seventy-two hours.

The shooting of a man-eater gives one a feeling of satisfaction. Satisfaction at having done a job that badly needed doing. Satisfaction at having outmanoeuvred, on his own ground, a very worthy antagonist. And, the greatest satisfaction of all, at having made a small portion of the earth safe for a brave little girl to walk on.





## *The Panar Man-Eater*

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### 1

WHILE I WAS HUNTING the Champawat man-eater in 1907, I heard of a man-eating leopard that was terrorizing the inhabitants of villages on the eastern border of Almora district. This leopard, about which questions were asked in the House of Commons, was known under several names and was credited with having killed four hundred human beings. I knew the animal under the name of the Panar man-eater, and I shall therefore use this name for the purpose of my story.

No mention is made in government records of man-eaters prior to the year 1905 and it would appear that until the advent of the Champawat tiger and the Panar leopard, man-eaters were unknown in Kumaon. When therefore these two animals— who between them killed eight hundred and thirty-six human beings— made their appearance, the Government was faced with a difficult situation for it had no machinery to put in action against them and had to rely on personal appeals to sportsmen. Unfortunately there were very few sportsmen in Kumaon at that time who had any inclination for this new form of sport which, rightly or wrongly was considered as hazardous as Wilson's solo attempt— made a few years later— to conquer Everest. I myself was as ignorant of man-eaters as

Wilson was of Everest and that I succeeded in my attempt, where he apparently failed in his, was due entirely to luck.

When I returned to my home in Naini Tal after killing the Champawat tiger I was asked by the Government to undertake the shooting of the Panar leopard. I was working hard for a living at the time and several weeks elapsed before I was able to spare the time to undertake this task, and then just as I was ready to start for the outlying area of Almora district in which the leopard was operating, I received an urgent request from Berthoud, the Deputy Commissioner of Naini Tal, to go to the help of the people of Muktesar where a man-eating tiger had established a reign of terror. After hunting down the tiger, an account of which I have given, I went in pursuit of the Panar leopard.

As I had not previously visited the vast area over which this leopard was operating, I went via Almora to learn all I could about the leopard from Stiffe, the Deputy Commissioner of Almora. He kindly invited me to lunch, provided me with maps, and then gave me a bit of a jolt when wishing me goodbye by asking me if I had considered all the risks and prepared for them by making my will.

My maps showed that there were two approaches to the affected area, one via Panwanaula on the Pithoragarh road, and the other via Lamgara on the Dabidhura road. I selected the latter route and after lunch set out in good heart— despite the reference to a will— accompanied by one servant and four men carrying my luggage. My men and I had already done a still march of fourteen miles from Khairna, but being young and fit were prepared to do another long march before calling it a day.

As the full moon was rising we arrived at a small isolated building which, from the scribbling on the walls and the torn bits of paper lying about, we assumed was used as a school. I had no tent with me and as the door of the building was locked I decided to spend the night in the courtyard with my men, a perfectly safe proceeding for we were still many miles from the man-eater's hunting grounds. This courtyard, which was about twenty feet square, abutted on the public road and was surrounded on

three sides by a two-foot-high wall. On the fourth side it was bounded by the school building.

There was plenty of fuel in the jungle behind the school and my men soon had a fire burning in a corner of the courtyard for my servant to cook my dinner. I was sitting with my back to the locked door, smoking, and my servant had just laid a leg of mutton on the low wall nearest the road and turned to attend to the fire, when I saw the head of a leopard appear over the wall close to the leg of mutton. Fascinated, I sat motionless and watched— for the leopard was facing me— and when the man had moved away a few feet the leopard grabbed the meat and bounded across the road into the jungle beyond. The meat had been put down on a big sheet of paper, which had stuck to it, and when my servant heard the rustle of paper and saw what he thought was a dog running away with it he dashed forward shouting, but on realizing that he was dealing with a leopard and not with a mere dog he changed direction and dashed towards me with even greater speed. All white people in the East are credited with being a little mad— for other reasons than walking about in the midday sun— and I am afraid my good servant thought I was a little more mad than most of my kind when he found I was laughing, for he said in a very aggrieved voice, ‘It was your dinner that the leopard carried away and I have nothing else for you to eat.’ However, he duly produced a meal that did him credit, and to which I did as much justice as I am sure the hungry leopard did to his leg of prime mutton.



Making an early start next morning, we halted at Lamgara for a meal, and by evening reached the Dol Dak Bungalow on the border of the man-eater’s domain. Leaving my men at the bungalow I set out the following morning to try to get news of the man-eater. Going from village to village, and examining the connecting footpaths for leopard pug-marks, I arrived in the late evening at an isolated homestead consisting of a single stone-built slate-roofed house, situated in a few acres of cultivated land and surrounded

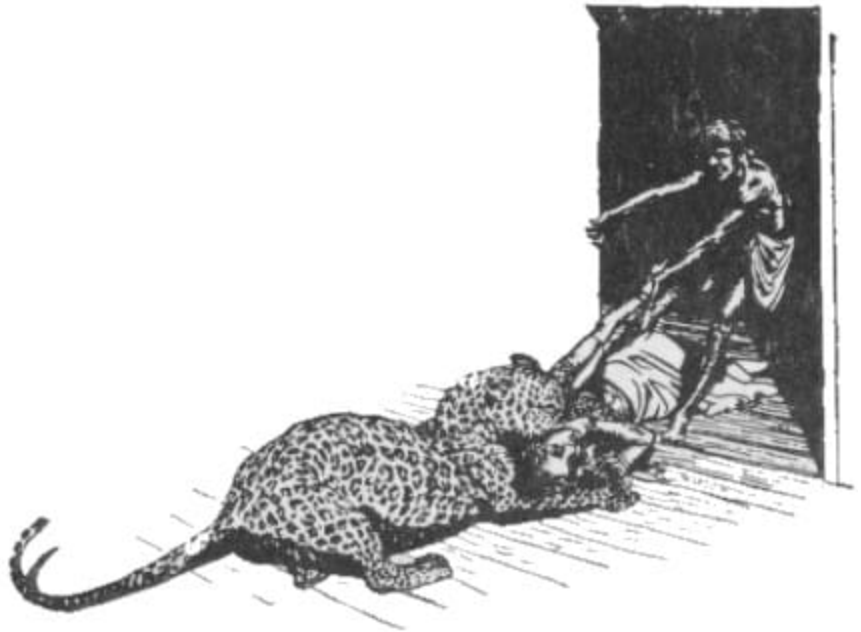
by scrub jungle. On the footpath leading to this homestead I found the pug-marks of a big male leopard.

As I approached the house a man appeared on the narrow balcony and, climbing down a few wooden steps, came across the courtyard to meet me. He was a young man, possibly twenty-two years of age, and in great distress. It appeared that the previous night while he and his wife were sleeping on the floor of the single room that comprised the house, with the door open for it was April and very hot, the man-eater climbed on to the balcony and getting a grip of his wife's throat started to pull her head-foremost out of the room. With a strangled scream the woman flung an arm round her husband who, realizing in a flash what was happening, seized her arm with one hand and placing the other against the lintel of the door, for leverage, jerked her away from the leopard and closed the door. For the rest of the night the man and his wife cowered in a corner of the room, while the leopard tried to tear down the door. In the hot unventilated room the woman's wounds started to turn septic and by morning her suffering and fear had rendered her unconscious.

Throughout the day the man remained with his wife, too frightened to leave her for fear the leopard should return and carry her away, and too frightened to face the mile of scrub jungle that lay between him and his nearest neighbour. As day was closing down and the unfortunate man was facing another night of terror he saw me coming towards the house, and when I had heard his story I was no longer surprised that he had run towards me and thrown himself sobbing at my feet.

A difficult situation faced me. I had not up to that time approached Government to provide people living in areas in which a man-eater was operating with first-aid sets, so there was no medical or any other kind of aid nearer than Almora, and Almora was twenty-five miles away. To get help for the woman I would have to go for it myself and that would mean condemning the man to lunacy, for he had already stood as much as any man could stand and another night in that room, with the prospect of the leopard returning and trying to gain entrance, would of a certainty have landed him in a mad-house.

The man's wife, a girl of about eighteen, was lying on her back when the leopard clamped its teeth into her throat, and when the man got a grip of her arm and started to pull her back, the leopard—to get a better purchase—drove the claws of



one paw into her breast. In the final struggle the claws ripped through the flesh, making four deep cuts. In the heat of the small room, which had only one door and no windows and in which a swarm of flies were buzzing, all the wounds in the girl's throat and on her breast had turned septic, and whether medical aid could be procured or not, the chances of her surviving were very slight; so, instead of going for help, I decided to stay the night with the man. I very sincerely hope that no one who reads this story will ever be condemned to seeing and hearing the sufferings of a human being, or of an animal, that has had the misfortune of being caught by the throat by either a leopard or a tiger and not having the means—other than a bullet—of alleviating or of ending the suffering.

The balcony which ran the length of the house, and which was boarded up at both ends, was about fifteen feet long and four feet wide, accessible by steps hewn in a pine sapling. Opposite, these steps was the one door of the house, and under the balcony was an open recess four feet wide and four feet high, used for storing firewood.

The man begged me to stay in the room with him and his wife but it was not possible for me to do this, for, though I am not squeamish, the smell in the room was overpowering and more than I could stand. So between us we moved the firewood from one end of the recess under the balcony, clearing



a small space where I could sit with my back to the wall. Night was now closing in, so after a wash and a drink at a near-by spring I settled down in my corner and told the man to go up to his wife and keep the door of the room open. As he climbed the steps the man said, ‘ The leopard will surely kill you, Sahib, and then what will I do?’ ‘Close the door,’ I answered, ‘and wait for the morning.’

The moon was two nights off the full and there would be a short period of darkness. It was this period of darkness that was worrying me. If the leopard had remained scratching at the door until daylight, as the man said it had, it would not have gone far and even now it might be lurking in the bushes watching me. I had been in position for half an hour, straining my eyes into the darkening night and praying for the moon to top the hills to the east, when a jackal gave its alarm call. This call, which is given with the full force of the animal’s lungs, can be heard for a very long distance and can be described as ‘pheaon, pheaoon’, repeated over and over again as long as the danger that has alarmed the jackal is in sight. Leopards when hunting or when approaching a kill move very slowly, and it would be many minutes before this one— assuming it was the man-eater— covered the half mile between us, and even if in the meantime the moon had not risen it would be giving sufficient light to shoot by, so I was able to relax and breathe more freely.

Minutes dragged by. The jackal stopped calling. The moon rose over the hills, flooding the ground in front of me with brilliant light. No movement to be seen anywhere, and the only sound to be heard in all the world was the agonized fight for breath of the unfortunate girl above me. Minutes gave way to hours. The moon climbed the heavens and then started to go down in the west, casting the shadow of the house on the ground I was watching. Another period of danger, for if the leopard had seen me he would, with a leopard’s patience, be waiting for these lengthening shadows to mask his movements. Nothing happened, and one of the longest nights I have ever watched through came to an end when the light from the sun lit up the sky where, twelve hours earlier, the moon had risen.

The man, after his vigil of the previous night, had slept soundly and as I left my corner and eased my aching bones— only those who have sat motionless on hard ground for hours know how bones can ache— he came down the steps. Except for a few wild raspberries I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and as no useful purpose would have been served by my remaining any longer, I bade the man goodbye and set off to rejoin my men at the Dol Dak Bungalow, eight miles away, and summon aid for the girl. I had only gone a few miles when I met my men. Alarmed at my long absence they had packed up my belongings, paid my dues at the Dak Bungalow, and then set out to look for me. While I was talking to them the Road Overseer, whom I have mentioned in my story of the Temple tiger, came along. He was well mounted on a sturdy Bhootia pony, and as he was on his way to Almora he gladly undertook to carry a letter from me to Stiffe. Immediately on receipt of my letter Stiffe dispatched medical aid for the girl, but her sufferings were over when it arrived.

It was this Road Overseer who informed me about the human kill that took me to Dabidhura, where I met with one of the most interesting and the most exciting *shikar* experiences I have ever had. After that experience I asked the old priest of the Dabidhura temple if the man-eater had as effective protection from his temple as the tiger I had failed to shoot, and he answered, ‘No, no, Sahib. This *shaitan* (devil) has killed many people who worshipped at my temple and when you come back to shoot him, as you say you will, I shall offer prayers for your success morning and evening.’

## 2

No matter how full of happiness our life may have been, there are periods in it that we look back to with special pleasure. Such a period for me was the year 1910, for in that year I shot the Muktesar man-eating tiger and the Panar man-eating leopard, and in between these two— for me— great events, my men and I set up an all-time record at Mokameh Ghat by handling, without any mechanical means, five thousand five hundred tonnes of goods in a single working day.

My first attempt to shoot the Panar leopard was made in April 1910, and it was not until September of the same year that I was able to spare the time to make a second attempt. I have no idea how many human beings were killed by the leopard between April and September, for no bulletins were issued by Government and beyond a reference to questions asked in the House of Commons no mention of the leopard— as far as I am aware — was made in the Indian press. The Panar leopard was credited with having killed four hundred human beings, against one hundred and twenty-five killed by the Rudraprayag leopard, and the fact that the former received such scant publicity while the latter was headline news throughout India was due entirely to the fact that the Panar leopard operated in a remote area far from the beaten track, whereas the Rudraprayag leopard operated in an area visited each year by sixty thousand pilgrims ranging from the humblest in the land to the highest, all of whom had to run the gauntlet of the man-eater. It was these pilgrims, and the daily bulletins issued by the Government, that made the Rudraprayag leopard so famous, though it caused far less human suffering than the Panar leopard.

Accompanied by a servant and four men carrying my camp kit and provisions, I set out from Naini Tal on 10 September on my second attempt to shoot the Panar leopard. The sky was overcast when we left home at 4 a.m. and we had only gone a few miles when a deluge of rain came on. Throughout the day it rained and we arrived at Almora, after a twenty-eight-mile march, wet to the bone. I was to have spent the night with Stiffe, but not having a stitch of dry clothing to put on I excused myself and spent the night at the Dak Bungalow. There were no other travellers there and the man in charge very kindly put two rooms at my disposal, with a big wood fire in each, and by morning my kit was dry enough for me to continue my journey.

It had been my intention to follow the same route from Almora that I had followed in April, and start my hunt for the leopard from the house in which the girl had died of her wounds. While I was having breakfast a mason by the name of Panwa, who did odd jobs for us in Naini Tal, presented himself. Panwa's home was in the Panar valley, and on learning from my men that I was on my way to try to shoot the man-eater he asked for permission to join

our party, for he wanted to visit his home and was frightened to undertake the journey alone. Panwa knew the country and on his advice I altered my plans and instead of taking the road to Dabidhura via the school where the leopard had eaten my dinner, I took the road leading to Pithoragarh. Spending the night at the Panwa Naula Dak Bungalow, we made an early start next morning and after proceeding a few miles left the Pithoragarh road for a track leading off to the right. We were now in the man-eater's territory where there were no roads, and where the only communication was along footpaths running from village to village.

Progress was slow, for the villages were widely scattered over many hundreds of square miles of country, and as the exact whereabouts of the man-eater were not known it was necessary to visit each village to make inquiries. Going through Salan and Rangot pattis (patti is a group of villages), I arrived late on the evening of the fourth day at Chakati, where I was informed by the headman that a human being had been killed a few days previously at a village called Sanouli on the far side of the Panar river. Owing to the recent heavy rain the Panar was in flood and the headman advised me to spend the night in his village, promising to give me a guide next morning to show me the only safe ford over the river, for the Panar was not bridged.

The headman and I had carried on our conversation at one end of a long row of double-storied buildings and when, on his advice, I elected to stay the night in the village, he said he would have two rooms vacated in the upper storey for myself and my men. I had noticed while talking to him that the end room on the ground floor was untenanted, so I told him I would stay in it and that he need only have one room vacated in the upper storey for my men. The room I had elected to spend the night in had no door, but this did not matter for I had been told that the last kill had taken place on the far side of the river and I knew the man-eater would not attempt to cross the river while it was in flood.

The room had no furniture of any kind, and after my men had swept all the straw and bits of rags out of it, complaining as they did so that the last tenant must have been a very dirty person, they spread my groundsheet on

the mud floor and made up my bed. I ate my dinner— which my servant cooked on an open fire in the courtyard— sitting on my bed, and as I had done a lot of walking during the twelve hours I had been on my feet, it did not take me long to get to sleep. The sun was just rising next morning, flooding the room with light, when on hearing a slight sound in the room I opened my eyes and saw a man sitting on the floor near my bed. He was about fifty years of age, and in the last stage of leprosy. On seeing that I was awake this unfortunate living death said he hoped I had spent a comfortable night in his room. He went on to say that he had been on a two-days' visit to friends in an adjoining village, and finding me asleep in his room on his return had sat near my bed and waited for me to awake.

Leprosy, the most terrible and the most contagious of all diseases in the East, is very prevalent throughout Kumaon, and especially bad in Almora district. Being fatalists the people look upon the disease as a visitation from God, and neither segregate the afflicted nor take any precautions against infection. So quite evidently, the headman did not think it necessary to warn me that the room I had selected to stay in had for years been the home of a leper. It did not take me long to dress that morning, and as soon as our guide was ready we left the village.

Moving about as I have done in Kumaon I have always gone in dread of leprosy, and I have never felt as unclean as I did after my night in that poor unfortunate's room. At the first stream we came to I called a halt, for my servant to get breakfast ready for me and for my men to have their food. Then, telling my men to wash my groundsheet and lay my bedding out in the sun, I took a bar of carbolic soap and went down the stream to where there was a little pool surrounded by great slabs of rock. Taking off every stitch of clothing I had worn in that room, I washed it all in the pool and, after laying it out on the slabs of rock, I used the remainder of the soap to scrub myself as I had never scrubbed myself before. Two hours later, in garments that had shrunk a little from the rough treatment they had received, I returned to my men feeling clean once again, and with a hunter's appetite for breakfast.

Our guide was a man about four feet six inches tall with a big head crowned with a mop of long hair; a great barrel of a body, short legs, and few words. When I asked him if we had any stiff climbing to do, he stretched out his open hand, and answered, 'Flat as that.' Having said this he led us down a very steep hill into a deep valley. Here I expected him to turn and follow the valley down to its junction with the river. But no. Without saying a word or even turning his head he crossed the open ground and went straight up the hill on the far side. This hill, in addition to being very steep and overgrown with thorn bushes, had loose gravel on it which made the going difficult, and as the sun was now overhead and very hot, we reached the top in a bath of sweat. Our guide, whose legs appeared to have been made for climbing hills, had not turned a hair.

There was an extensive view from the top of the hill, and when our guide informed us that we still had the two high hills in the foreground to climb before reaching the Panar river, Panwa, the mason, who was carrying a bundle containing presents for his family and a great coat made of heavy dark material, handed the coat to the guide and said that as he was making us climb all the hills in Kumaon he could carry the coat for the rest of the way. Unwinding a length of goat hair cord from round his body the guide folded up the coat and strapped it securely to his back. Down and up we went, and down and up again, and then away down in a deep valley we saw the river. So far we had been going over trackless ground, without a village in sight, but we now came on a narrow path running straight down to the river. The nearer we got to the river the less I liked the look of it. The path leading to the water and up the far side showed that there was a ford here, but the river was in flood and the crossing appeared to me to be a very hazardous one. The guide assured us, however, that it was perfectly safe to cross, so removing my shoes and stockings I linked arms with Panwa and stepped into the water. The river was about forty yards wide and from its broken surface I judged it was running over a very rough bed. In this I was right, and after stubbing my toes a few times and narrowly avoiding being washed off our feet, we struggled out on the far bank.

Our guide had followed us into the river and on looking back, I saw that the little man was in difficulties. The water which for us had been thigh

deep was for him waist deep and on reaching the main stream, instead of bracing his back against it and walking crab fashion, he very foolishly faced up-stream with the result that he was swept over backwards and submerged under the fast-running current. I was barefoot and helpless on the sharp stones, but Panwa— to whom sharp stones were no obstacle— threw down the bundle he was carrying and without a moment's hesitation sprinted along the bank to where fifty yards farther down, a big slab of rock jutted into the river at the head of a terrifying rapid. Running out on to this wet and slippery rock Panwa lay down, and as the drowning man was swept past, grabbed him by his long hair and after a desperate struggle drew him on to the rock. When the two men rejoined me— the guide looking like a drowned rat— I complimented Panwa on his noble and brave act in having saved the little man's life, at great risk to his own. After looking at me in some surprise Panwa said, 'Oh, it was not his life that I wanted to save, but my new coat that was strapped to his back.' Anyway, whatever the motive, a tragedy had been averted, and after my men had linked arms and crossed safely I decided to call it a day and spend the night on the river bank. Panwa, whose village was five miles farther up the river, now left me, taking with him the guide, who was frightened to attempt a second crossing of the river.

### 3

Next morning we set out to find Sanouli, where the last human kill had taken place. Late in the evening of that day we found ourselves in a wide open valley, and as there were no human habitations in sight, we decided to spend the night on the open ground. We were now in the heart of the man-eater's country and after a very unrestful night, spent on cold wet ground, arrived about midday at Sanouli. The inhabitants of this small village were overjoyed to see us and they very gladly put a room at the disposal of my men, and gave me the use of an open platform with a thatched roof.

The village was built on the side of a hill overlooking a valley in which there were terraced fields, from which a paddy crop had recently been harvested. The hill on the far side of the valley sloped up gradually, and a

hundred yards from the cultivated land there was a dense patch of brushwood, some twenty acres in extent. On the brow of the hill, above this patch of brushwood, there was a village, and on the shoulder of the hill to the right another village. To the left of the terraced fields the valley was closed in by a steep grassy hill. So, in effect, the patch of brushwood was surrounded on three sides by cultivated land, and on the fourth by open grass land.

While breakfast was being got ready, the men of the village sat round me and talked. During the second half of March and the first half of April, four human beings had been killed in this area by the man-eater. The first kill had taken place in the village on the shoulder of the hill, the second and third in the village on the brow of the hill, and the fourth in Sanouli. All four victims had been killed at night and carried some five hundred yards into the patch of brushwood, where the leopard had eaten them at his leisure, for— having no firearms— the inhabitants of the three villages were too frightened to make any attempt to recover the bodies. The last kill had taken place six days before, and my informants were convinced that the leopard was still in the patch of brushwood.

I had purchased two young male goats in a village we passed through earlier that day, and towards evening I took the smaller one and tied it at the edge of the path of brushwood to test the villager's assertion that the leopard was still in the cover. I did not sit over the goat, because there were no suitable trees nearby and also because clouds were banking up and it looked as though there might be rain during the night. The platform that had been placed at my disposal was open all round, so I tied the second goat near it in the hope that if the leopard visited the village during the night it would prefer a tender goat to a tough human being. Long into the night I listened to the two goats calling to each other. This convinced me that the leopard was not within hearing distance. However, there was no reason why he should not return to the locality, so I went to sleep hoping for the best.





There was a light shower during the night and when the sun rose in a cloudless sky every leaf and blade of grass was sparkling with raindrops and every bird that had a song to sing was singing a joyful welcome to the day. The goat near my platform was contentedly browsing off a bush and bleating occasionally; while the one across the valley was silent. Telling my servant to keep my breakfast warm, I crossed the valley and went to the

spot where I had tied up the smaller goat. Here I found that, some time before the rain came on, a leopard had killed the goat, broken the rope, and carried away the kill. The rain had washed out the drag-mark, but this did not matter for there was only one place to which the leopard could have taken his kill, and that was into the dense patch of brushwood.

Stalking a leopard, or a tiger, on its kill is one of the most interesting forms of sport I know of, but it can only be indulged in with any hope of success when the conditions are favourable. Here the conditions were not favourable, for the brushwood was too dense to permit of a noiseless approach. Returning to the village, I had breakfast and then called the villagers together, as I wanted to consult them about the surrounding country. It was necessary to visit the kill to see if the leopard had left sufficient for me to sit over and, while doing so, I would not be able to avoid disturbing the leopard. What I wanted to learn from the villagers was whether there was any other heavy cover, within a reasonable distance, to which the leopard could retire on being disturbed by me. I was told that there was no such cover nearer than two miles, and that to get to it the leopard would have to cross a wide stretch of cultivated land.

At midday I returned to the patch of brushwood and, a hundred yards from where he had killed it, I found all that the leopard had left of the goat — its hooves, horns, and part of its stomach. As there was no fear of the leopard leaving the cover at that time of day for the jungle two miles away, I tried for several hours to stalk it, helped by bulbuls, drongos, thrushes, and scimitar-babblers, all of whom kept me informed of the leopard's every movement. In case any should question why I did not collect the men of the three villages and get them to drive the leopard out on to the open ground, where I could have shot it, it is necessary to say that this could not have been attempted without grave danger to the beaters. As soon as the leopard found he was being driven towards open ground, he would have broken back and attacked anyone who got in his way.

On my return to the village after my unsuccessful attempt to get a shot at the leopard, I went down with a bad attack of malaria and for the next twenty-four hours I lay on the platform in a stupor. By the evening of the

following day the fever had left me and I was able to continue the hunt. On their own initiative the previous night my men had tied out the second goat where the first had been killed, but the leopard had not touched it. This was all to the good, for the leopard would now be hungry, and I set out on that third evening full of hope.



On the near side of the patch of brushwood, and about a hundred yards from where the goat had been killed two nights previously there was an old oak tree. This tree was growing out of a six-foot-high bank between two terraced fields and was leaning away from the hill at an angle that made it possible for me to walk up the trunk in my rubber soled shoes. On the underside of the trunk and about fifteen feet from the ground there was a branch jutting out over the lower field. This branch, which was about a foot thick, offered a very uncomfortable and a very unsafe seat for it was hollow and rotten. However, as it was the only branch on the tree, and as there were no other trees within a radius of several hundred yards, I decided to risk the branch.

As I had every reason to believe— from the similarity of the pug-marks I had found in the brushwood to those I had seen in April on the path leading to the homestead where the girl was killed— that the leopard I was dealing with was the Panar man-eater, I made my men cut a number of long blackthorn shoots. After I had taken my seat with my back to the tree and my legs stretched out along the branch, I made the men tie the shoots into bundles and lay them on the trunk of the tree and lash them to it securely with strong rope. To the efficient carrying out of these small details I am convinced I owe my life.

Several of the blackthorn shoots, which were from ten to twenty feet long, projected on either side of the tree; and as I had nothing to hold on to, to maintain my balance, I gathered the shoots on either side of me and held them firmly pressed between my arms and my body. By five o'clock my preparations were complete. I was firmly seated on the branch with my coat collar pulled up well in front to protect my throat, and my soft hat pulled down well behind to protect the back of my neck. The goat was tied to a stake driven into the field thirty yards in front of me, and my men were sitting out in the field smoking and talking loudly.

Up to this point all had been quiet in the patch of brushwood, but now, a scimitar-babbler gave its piercing alarm call followed a minute or two later by the chattering of several white-throated laughing thrushes. These two species of birds are the most reliable informants in the hills, and on hearing them I signalled to my men to return to the village. This they appeared to be very glad to do, and as they walked away, still talking loudly, the goat started bleating. Nothing happened for the next half-hour and then, as the sun was fading off the hill above the village, two drongos that had been sitting on the tree above me, flew off and started to bait some animal on the open ground between me and the patch of brushwood. The goat while calling had been facing in the direction of the village, and it now turned round, facing me, and stopped calling. By watching the goat I could follow the movements of the animal that the drongos were baiting and that the goat was interested in, and this animal could only be a leopard.

The moon was in her third quarter and there would be several hours of darkness. In anticipation of the leopard's coming when light conditions were not favourable, I had armed myself with a twelve-bore double-barrelled shot gun loaded with slugs, for there was a better chance of my hitting the leopard with eight slugs than with a single rifle bullet. Aids to night shooting, in the way of electric lights and torches, were not used in India at the time I am writing about, and all that one had to rely on for accuracy of aim was a strip of white cloth tied round the muzzle of the weapon.

Again nothing happened for many minutes, and then I felt a gentle pull on the blackthorn shoots I was holding and blessed my forethought in having had the shoots tied to the leaning tree, for I could not turn round to defend myself and at best the collar of my coat and my hat were poor protection. No question now that I was dealing with a man-eater, and a very determined man-eater at that. Finding that he could not climb over the thorns, the leopard, after his initial pull, had now got the butt ends of the shoots between his teeth and was jerking them violently, pulling me hard against the trunk of the tree. And now the last of the daylight faded out of the sky and the leopard, who did all his human killing in the dark, was in his element and I was out of mine, for in the dark a human being is the most helpless of all animals and— speaking for myself— his courage is at its lowest ebb. Having killed four hundred human beings at night, the leopard was quite unafraid of me, as was evident from the fact that while tugging at the shoots, he was growling loud enough to be heard by the men anxiously listening in the village. While this growling terrified the men, as they told me later, it had the opposite effect on me, for it let me know where the leopard was and what he was doing. It was when he was silent that I was most terrified, for I did not know what his next move would be. Several times he had nearly unseated me by pulling on the shoots vigorously and then suddenly letting them go, and now that it was dark and I had nothing stable to hold on to, I felt sure that if he sprang up he would only need to touch me to send me crashing to the ground.



After one of these nerve-racking periods of silence the leopard jumped down off the high bank and dashed towards the goat. In the hope that the leopard would come while there was still sufficient light to shoot by, I had tied the goat thirty yards from the tree to give me time to kill the leopard before it got to the goat. But now, in the dark, I could not save the goat— which, being white, I could only just see as an indistinct blur— so I waited

until it had stopped struggling and then aimed where I thought the leopard would be and pressed the trigger. My shot was greeted with an angry grunt and I saw a white flash as the leopard went over backwards, and disappeared down another high bank into the field beyond.

For ten or fifteen minutes I listened anxiously for further sounds from the leopard, and then my men called out and asked if they should come to me. It was now quite safe for them to do so, provided they kept to the high ground. So I told them to light pine torches, and thereafter carry out my instructions. These torches, made of twelve to eighteen inches long splinters of resin-impregnated pine-wood cut from a living tree, give a brilliant light and provide the remote villages in Kumaon with the only illumination they have ever known.

After a lot of shouting and running about, some twenty men each carrying a torch left the village and, following my instructions, circled round above the terraced fields and approached my tree from behind. The knots in the ropes securing the blackthorn shoots to the tree had been pulled so tight by the leopard that they had to be cut. After the thorns had been removed men climbed the tree and helped me down, for the uncomfortable seat had given me cramps in my legs.

The combined light from the torches lit up the field on which the dead goat was lying, but the terraced field beyond was in shadow. When cigarettes had been handed round I told the men I had wounded the leopard but did not know how badly, and that we would return to the village now and I would look for the wounded animal in the morning. At this, great disappointment was expressed. 'If you have wounded the leopard it must surely be dead by now. There are many of us, and you have a gun, so there is no danger.' 'At least let us go as far as the edge of the field and see if the leopard has left a blood trail.' After all arguments for and against going to look for the leopard immediately had been exhausted, I consented against my better judgement to go as far as the edge of the field, from where we could look down on the terraced field below.

Having acceded to their request, I made the men promise that they would walk in line behind me, hold their torches high, and not run away and leave me in the dark if the leopard charged. This promise they very willingly gave, and after the torches had been replenished and were burning brightly we set off, I walking in front and the men following five yards behind.

Thirty yards to the goat, and another twenty yards to the edge of the field. Very slowly, and in silence, we moved forward. When we reached the goat — no time now to look for a blood trail— the farther end of the lower field came into view. The nearer we approached the edge, the more of this field became visible, and then, when only a narrow strip remained in shadow from the torches, the leopard, with a succession of angry grunts, sprang up the bank and into full view.

There is something very terrifying in the angry grunt of a charging leopard, and I have seen a line of elephants that were staunch to tiger turn and stampede from a charging leopard; so I was not surprised when my companions, all of whom were unarmed, turned as one man and bolted. Fortunately for me, in their anxiety to get away they collided with each other and some of the burning splinters of pine— held loosely in their hands — fell to the ground and continued to flicker, giving me sufficient light to put a charge of slugs into the leopard's chest.

On hearing my shot the men stopped running, and then I heard one of them say, 'Oh, no. He won't be angry with us, for he knows that this devil has turned our courage to water.' Yes, I knew, from my recent experience on the tree, that fear of a man-eater robs a man of courage. As for running away, had I been one of the torchbearers I would have run with the best. So there was nothing for me to be angry about. Presently, while I was making believe to examine the leopard, to ease their embarrassment, the men returned in twos and threes. When they were assembled, I asked, without looking up, 'Did you bring a bamboo pole and rope to carry the leopard back to the village?' 'Yes,' they answered eagerly, 'we left them at the foot of the tree.' 'Go and fetch them,' I said, 'for I want to get back to the village for a cup of hot tea.' The cold night-wind blowing down from the

north had brought on another attack of malaria, and now that all the excitement was over I was finding it difficult to remain on my feet.

That night, for the first time in years, the people of Sanouli slept, and have since continued to sleep, free from fear.







## *The Chuka Man-Eater*

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### 1

**C**HUKA— WHICH GAVE ITS NAME to the man-eating tiger of the Ladhya valley— is a small village of some ten ploughs on the right bank of the Sarda river near its junction with the Ladhya. From the north-west corner of the village a path runs for a quarter of a mile along a fire track before it divides, one arm going straight up a ridge to Thak village and the other diagonally up and across the hills to Kotekindri, a village owned by the people of Chuka.

Along this latter path a man was driving two bullocks in the winter of 1936, and as he approached Chuka, a tiger suddenly appeared on the fire track. With very commendable courage the man interposed himself between the tiger and his bullocks and, brandishing his stick and shouting, attempted to drive the tiger away. Taking advantage of the diversion created in their favour the bullocks promptly bolted to the village and the tiger, baulked of his prey, turned his attention to the man. Alarmed at the threatening attitude of the tiger the man turned to run and, as he did so, the tiger sprang on him.

Across his shoulders the man had a heavy wooden plough, and on his back he was carrying a bag containing the provisions he needed for his stay at Chuka. While the tiger was expending its teeth and claws on the plough and bag, the man, relieved of his burdens, sprinted towards the village shouting for help as he ran. His relatives and friends, hearing his shouts, rallied to his assistance and he reached the village without further incident. One claw of the tiger had ripped his right arm from shoulder to wrist, inflicting a deep wound.

Some weeks later two men returning from the market at Tanakpur were climbing the steep path to Kotekindri, when a tiger crossed the path fifty yards ahead of them. Waiting for a few minutes to give the tiger time to move away from the vicinity of the path, the men proceeded on their way, shouting as they went. The tiger had not moved away, however, and as the leading man came abreast of it, it sprang on him. This man was carrying a sack of gur (unrefined sugar), half of which was on his head and the other half on his back. The tiger's teeth caught in the sack and he carried it away down the hillside, without doing the man any injury. There is no record of what the tiger thought of the captures he had made so far— a plough and a sack of gur— but it can be assumed he was not satisfied with his bag, for, from now on, he selected human beings who were not burdened with either ploughs or sacks.

Thak, which is about three thousand feet above Chuka, has quite a large population for a hill village. The Chand Rajas who ruled Kumaon before the advent of the Gurkhas, gave the lands of Thak to the forefathers of the present holders for their maintenance, and appointed them hereditary custodians of the Purnagiri temples. Rich lands and a considerable income from the temples have enabled the people of Thak to build themselves good substantial houses, and to acquire large herds of cattle.

On a day early in June 1937, seven men and two boys were herding the village cattle, two hundred yards to the west of Thak. At 10 a.m. it was noticed that some of the cattle were beginning to stray off the open ground towards the jungle and one of the boys, aged fourteen, was sent to turn them back. Six hours later the men, who had been sleeping through the heat of

the day, were aroused by the barking of a *kakar* in the jungle bordering the open ground, into which all the cattle had by now strayed, and the second boy who was also about fourteen was sent to drive them out.



Shortly after he entered the jungle the cattle stampeded and as they were crossing an open ravine on their way to the village a tiger sprang on one of the cows, and killed it in full view of the seven men. The bellowing of the cattle and the shouts of the men attracted the attention of the people in the village, and a crowd soon collected on the high ground overlooking the ravine. The mother— a widow— of the second boy was among these people and, on hearing the men calling to her son, she ran towards them to inquire what had happened. On learning that her son had entered the jungle to drive out the cattle and had not returned , she set off to look for him. At this moment the parents of the first boy arrived on the scene and it was only when they asked where their son was that the seven men remembered they had not seen him since 10 a.m.

Followed by the large crowd of men who had now collected in the ravine near the dead cow, the distraught mother went into the jungle and found her son where the tiger had killed and left him, and under a near-by bush the parents of the first boy found their son dead and partly eaten. Close to this boy was a dead calf. From the accounts the villagers subsequently gave me of the tragic happenings of that day, I believe that the tiger was lying up in the jungle overlooking the ground on which the cattle were grazing, and when the calf, unseen by the men, entered the jungle the tiger killed it, and before it was able to carry it away, the boy either inadvertently or through curiosity approached the calf, was killed, dragged under the bush, and partly eaten. After this the tiger apparently lay up near his two kills until 4

p.m. when a *kakar* on its way to drink at the small pool on the edge of the clearing either saw or smelt it and started barking. This aroused the men to the fact that the cattle had strayed into the jungle, and the second boy who was sent to drive them out had the ill luck to go straight to the spot where the tiger was guarding his kills.

The killing of the second boy was evidently witnessed by the cattle, who rallied to his rescue—I have seen this happen with both cows and buffaloes—and after driving the tiger from the boy they stampeded. Enraged at being driven off his kills, and at the rough treatment he had quite possibly received in the process, the tiger followed the stampeding cattle and wreaked his vengeance on the first one he was able to get hold of. Had the herd not run right on into the village he would probably not have been satisfied with killing only one of his attackers. In a similar case of attempted rescue I once saw an entire herd of five buffaloes wiped out in a titanic fight with an enraged tiger. The tiger killed one of their number and the other four big-hearted animals attacked him and fought on until the last of them had been killed. The tiger evidently suffered severely in the fight, for when he left the battle-ground he left a trail of blood.

The seemingly wanton slaughter of two human beings and two animals on the same day—resulting I am convinced from the tiger's having been disturbed on his first kill—caused a great outcry in the districts of Nairn Tal and Almora, and every effort was made to kill the tiger. On several occasions district officials sat up all night on machans over kills, and though the tiger had been wounded on two occasions—unfortunately only with buckshot—he continued to prey on human beings, and claimed yet another victim from the ill-fated village of Thak.

Two hundred yards above Thak there is a wheat field. The crop had been cut from this field and two boys were grazing a few cattle on the stubble. For safety's sake the boys, who were brothers and orphans ten and twelve years of age, were sitting in the middle of the field. On the far side of the field, from the village, there was a light fringe of bushes. From these the hill went steeply up for a thousand feet, and from anywhere on the hill the two boys sitting in the open would have been visible. Towards the afternoon a

cow strayed towards the bushes and the boys, keeping close together, set off to drive it back on to the field. The elder boy was leading and as he passed a bush the tiger, who was lying in wait, pounced on him and carried him away. The younger boy fled back to the village and dashing up to a group of men fell sobbing at their feet. When the boy was able to speak coherently he told the men that big red animal— it was the first tiger he had ever seen — had carried away his brother. A search party was hastily organized and with very commendable bravery the blood trail was followed for about a mile into the densely wooded Suwar Gadh ravine to the east of the village. Night was now closing in, so the party returned to Thak. The following day, assisted by men from adjoining villages, a day-long search was made but all that was found of the boy was his red cap and his torn and bloodstained clothes. That was the Chuka man-eater's last human victim.

I do not think it is possible to appreciate courage until danger that brought it into being has been experienced. Those who have never lived in an area in which a man-eating tiger is operating may be inclined to think that there was nothing courageous in a mother going to look for her son, in two boys grazing cattle, or in a party of men going out to look for a missing boy. But to one who has lived in such an area the entry of the mother into a dense patch of jungle in which she knew there was an angry tiger; the two small boys sitting close together for protection; and the party of unarmed men following on the blood trail left by a man-eater were acts calling for a measure of courage that merits the greatest admiration.

## 2

The Chuka man-eater was now disorganizing life for everyone in the Ladhya valley, and shortly after Ibbotson had been appointed Deputy Commissioner-in-Charge of the three districts of Naini Tal, Almora, and Garhwal, we joined forces to try to rid his division of the menace.

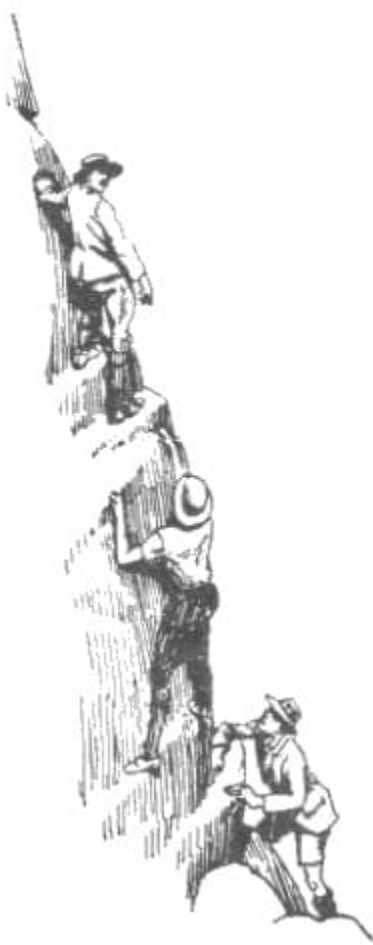
It was early afternoon on a sweltering hot day in April 1937 that Ibbby, his wife Jean, and I, alighted from our motor bus at the Boom above Baramdeo. We had left Naini Tal in the early hours of the morning and, travelling via

Haldwani and Tanakpur, arrived at the Boom at the hottest time of the day, covered in dust from head to foot, and with many sore spots in unseen and tender places. A cup of tea drunk while sitting on yielding sand on the bank of the Sarda river helped restore our spirits, and taking the short cut along the river bank we set off on foot to Thuli Gadh where our tents, sent in advance, had been pitched.

Starting after breakfast next morning we went to Kaladhunga. The distance between Thuli Gadh and Kaladhunga via the Sarda gorge is eight miles, and via Purnagiri, fourteen miles. The Ibbotsons and I went through the gorge while our servants and the men carrying our kit went via Purnagiri. The gorge is four miles long and was at one time traversed by a tramway line blasted out of the rock cliff by J. V Collier when extracting the million cubic feet of sal timber presented by the Nepal Durbar to the Government of India as a thank-offering after the First World War. The tramway line has long since been swept away by landslides and floods, and these four miles necessitate a great deal of rock climbing where a false step or the slipping of a hand-hold would inevitably precipitate one into the cold river. We negotiated the gorge without mishap, and at the upper end, where Collier's tramline entered the forest, we caught two fish in a run where a rock of the size of a house juts out into the river.

Word had been sent ahead for the patwaris and forest guards working in the area to meet us at Kaladhunga and give us the latest news of the man-eater. We found four men awaiting our arrival at the bungalow and the reports they gave us were encouraging. No human beings had been killed within the past few days, and the tiger was known to be in the vicinity of Thak village where three days previously it had killed a calf.

Kaladhunga is a gently rising cone-shaped peninsula roughly four miles long and a mile wide, surrounded on three sides by the Sarda river and backed on the fourth by a ridge of hills five thousand feet high. The bungalow, a three-roomed house with a wide veranda, faces east and is situated at the northern or upper end of the peninsula. The view from the veranda as the morning sun rises over the distant hills and the mist is lifting is one of the most pleasing prospects it is possible to imagine. Straight in



front, and across the Sarda, is a wide open valley running deep into Nepal. The hills on either side are densely wooded, and winding through the valley is a river fringed with emerald-green elephant grass. As far as the eye can see there are no human habitations and, judging from the tiger and other animal calls that can be heard from the bungalow, there appears to be an abundant stock of game in the valley. It was from this valley that Collier extracted the million cubic feet of timber.

We spent a day at Kaladhunga, and while our men went on to Chuka to pitch our tents and make camp we fished, or, to be correct, the Ibbotsons fished while I, who had been laid up with malaria the previous night, sat on the bank and watched. From the broken water below the bungalow to the point of the peninsula— a stretch of some five hundred yards— the Ibbotsons, who are expert thread-line casters, combed the river with their one-inch spoons without moving a fish. The small

river that flows down the Nepal valley joins the Sarda opposite the point of the peninsula. Here the Sarda widens out and shallows, and flows for two hundred yards over rocks before entering a big pool. It was at the upper end of this run and well out in the river that Ibby hooked his first fish— an eight-pounder— which needed careful handling on the light tackle before it was eventually brought to the bank and landed.

All keen anglers delight in watching others of the craft indulging in this, one of the best of outdoor sports. As for myself, I would just as soon watch another fishing than fish myself, especially when fish are on the take, the foothold uncertain— as it always is in the Sarda— and the river fairly fast. Shortly after Ibby killed his fish, Jean— who was fishing in broken water thirty yards from the bank— hooked a fish. Her reel only held a hundred yards of thread line, and fearing that the fish would make for the pool and break her, she attempted to walk backwards while playing the fish, and in

doing so lost her footing and for a long minute all that was visible of her was the toe of one foot and the point of her rod. You will naturally assume that I, forgetting my recent attack of malaria, dashed out to her rescue. As a matter of fact I did nothing of the kind and only sat on the bank and laughed, for to attempt to rescue either of the Ibbotsons from a watery grave would be as futile as trying to save an otter from drowning. After a long and a violent struggle Jean upended herself, and reaching the bank killed her fish, which weighed six pounds. Hardly had she done so when Ibby, in making a long cast, slipped off the rock on which he was standing and disappeared under water, rod and all.

From the bottom end of the pool below the run, the river turns to the right. On the Nepal side of this bend in the river there had stood a giant *semul* tree, in the upper branches of which a pair of ospreys had for many years built their nest. The tree had been an ideal home for the birds, for not only had it commanded an extensive view of the river, but the great branches growing out at right angles to the trunk had also provided tables on which to hold and devour their slippery prey. The monsoon floods of the previous year had cut into the bank and washed away the old tree and the ospreys had built themselves a new nest in a tall *shisham* tree standing at the edge of the forest, a hundred yards from the river.

The run was evidently the favourite fishing ground of ospreys, and while the female sat in the nest the male kept flying backwards and forwards over the Ibbotsons' heads. Eventually tiring of this unprofitable exercise it flew farther down the river to where a few partly submerged rocks broke the surface of the water, making a small run. Fish were evidently passing this spot, and a dozen times the osprey banked steeply, closed his wings, and dropped like a plummet and, checking himself with widespread wings and tail before reaching the water, rose flapping to regain height for his next cast. At last his patience was rewarded. An unwary fish had come to the surface directly below him, and without a moment's pause he went from flat flight into a lightning dive through a hundred feet of air and plunged deep into the broken water. His needle-sharp and steel-strong talons took hold, but the catch was evidently heavier than he anticipated. Time and time again with wildly threshing wings he attempted to launch himself into the



air, only to sink down again on his breast feathers. I believe he would have had to relinquish his catch had not a gust of wind blowing up river come at this critical moment to help him. As the wind reached him he turned downstream and, making one last desperate effort, got the fish clear of the water. Home was in the opposite direction from that in which he was now heading but to turn was impossible, so, selecting a great slab of rock on the bank on which to land, he made straight for it.

I was not the only one who had been watching the osprey, for he had hardly landed on the rock when a woman who had been washing clothes on the Nepal side of the river called out excitedly, and a boy appeared on the high bank above her. Running, down the steep track to where the woman was standing, he received his instructions and set off along the boulder-strewn bank at a pace that threatened his neck and limbs at every stride. The osprey made no attempt to carry off his prey, and as the boy reached the rock it took to the air, circling round his head as he held up the fish— which appeared to be about four pounds in weight— for the woman to see.



For some time thereafter I lost sight of the osprey, and we had finished our lunch before I again saw him quartering the air above the run in which he had caught the fish of which the boy had deprived him. Back and forth he flew for many minutes, always at the same height, and then he banked, dropped fifty feet, again banked and then plunged straight into the water. This time his catch was lighter — a kalabas about two pounds in weight— and without effort he lifted it clear of the water and, holding it like a torpedo to reduce wind pressure, made for his nest. His luck was out that day, however, for he had only covered half the distance he had to go, when a Pallas fish-eagle twice his weight and size came up from behind, rapidly overtaking him. The osprey saw him coming and altering his course a point to the right headed for the forest with the object of shaking off his pursuer among the branches of the trees. The eagle realizing the object of this manoeuvre

emitted a scream of rage and increased his speed. Only twenty yards more to go to reach safety, but the risk was too great to take and, relinquishing his hold of the kalabas, the osprey— only just in time— hurled himself straight into the air. The fish had not fallen a yard before the eagle caught it and, turning in a graceful sweep, made off down river in the direction from which he had come. He was not to escape with his booty as easily as he expected, however, for he had only gone a short distance on his return journey when the pair of crows that fed on the osprey's leavings set off to bait him, and to shake them off he too was compelled to take to the forest. At the edge of the forest the crows turned back and the eagle had hardly disappeared from view when falling out of the sky came two Tawny eagles going at an incredible speed in the direct line the Pallas eagle had taken. I very greatly regret I did not see the end of the chase for, from the fact that while I watched neither of the birds rose out of the forest, I suspect that the Pallas eagle retained his hold on the fish too long. I have only once seen a more interesting chase. On that occasion I was taking a line of eighteen elephants through grass and the ten guns and five spectators who were sitting on the elephants, shooting black partridge, saw a bush chat pass— without once touching the ground— from a sparrow-hawk that killed it just in front of our line of elephants to a red-headed merlin, then to a honey buzzard, and finally to a peregrine falcon who swallowed the little bird whole. If any of the guns or spectators who were with me that February morning read this chapter, they will recall the occurrence as having taken place on the Rudrapur Maidan.

After an early breakfast next morning we moved from Kaladhunga to Chuka, an easy march of five miles. It was one of those gorgeous days that live long in the memory of a fisherman. The sun was pleasantly warm; a cool wind blowing down from the north; a run of chilwa (fingerlings) in progress; and the river full of big fish madly on the take. Fishing with light tackle we had many exciting battles, all of which we did not win. We ended the day, however, with enough fish to feed our camp of thirty men.

To assist us in our campaign against the man-eater, and to try to prevent further loss of human life, six young male buffaloes had been sent up from Tanakpur in advance of us, to be used as bait for the tiger. On our arrival at Chuka we were told that the buffaloes had been tied out for three nights, and that though a tiger's pug-marks had been seen near several of them, none had been killed. During the next four days we visited the buffaloes in the early morning; tried to get in touch with the tiger during the day, and in the evening accompanied the men engaged in tying out the buffaloes. On the fifth morning we found that a buffalo we had tied up at Thak, at the edge of the jungle in which the two boys had lost their lives, had been killed and carried off by a tiger. Instead of taking its kill into the dense jungle as we had expected, the tiger had taken it across an open patch of ground, and up on to a rocky knoll. This it had evidently done to avoid passing near a *machan* from which it had been fired at— and quite possibly wounded— on two previous occasions. After the buffalo had been dragged for a short distance its horns got jammed between two rocks, and being unable to free it, the tiger had eaten a few pounds of flesh from the hindquarters of the kill and then left it. In casting round to see in which direction the tiger had gone, we found its pug-marks in a buffalo wallow, between the kill and the jungle. These pug-marks showed that the killer of the buffalo was a big male tiger.

It was generally believed by the District Officials— on what authority I do not know— that the man-eater was a tigress. On showing them the tracks in the buffalo wallow we were told by the villagers that they could not distinguish between the pug-marks of different tigers and that they did not know whether the man-eater was male or female, but that they did know it had a broken tooth. In all the kills, human as well as animal, that had taken place near their village they had noticed that one of the tiger's teeth only bruised the skin and did not penetrate it. From this they concluded that one of the man-eater's canine teeth was broken.

Twenty yards from the kill there was a *jamun* tree. After we had dragged the kill out from between the rocks we sent a man up the tree to break a few twigs that were obstructing a view of the kill from the only branch of the tree in which it was possible to sit. This isolated tree on the top of the knoll

was in full view of the surrounding jungle, and though the man climbed it and broke the twigs with the utmost care, I am inclined to think he was seen by the tiger.

It was now 11 a.m., so, sending our men back to the village to have their midday meal, Ibby and I selected a bush under which to shelter from the sun and talked and dozed, and dozed and talked throughout the heat of the day. At 2.30 p.m., while we were having a picnic lunch, some *kalege* pheasants started chattering agitatedly at the edge of the jungle where the buffalo had been killed, and on hearing them our men returned from the village. While Ibby and his big-hearted man, Sham Singh, went into the jungle where the pheasants were chattering— to attract the tiger's attention — I climbed silently into the *jamun* tree. Giving me a few minutes in which to settle down, Ibby and Sham Singh came out of the jungle and returned to our camp at Chuka, leaving my two men at Thak.

Shortly after Ibby had gone the pheasants started chattering again and a little later a *kakar* began barking. The tiger was evidently on the move, but there was little hope of his crossing the open ground and coming to the kill until the sun had set and the village had settled down for the night. The *kakar* barked for a quarter of an hour or more before it finally stopped, and from then until sunset, except for the natural calls of a multitude of birds, the jungle— as far as the tiger was concerned— was silent.

The red glow from the setting sun had faded from the Nepal hills on the far side of the Sarda river, and the village sounds had died down, when a *kakar* barked in the direction of the buffalo wallow; the tiger was returning to his kill along the line he had taken when leaving it. A convenient branch in front of me gave a perfect rest for my rifle, and the only movement it would be necessary to make when the tiger arrived would be to lower my head on to the rifle butt. Minute succeeded minute until a hundred had been added to my age and then, two hundred yards up the hillside, a *kakar* barked in alarm and my hope of getting a shot, which I had put at ten to one, dropped to one in a thousand. It was now quite evident that the tiger had seen my man breaking the twigs off the tree, and that between sunset and the barking of this last *kakar* he had stalked the tree and seeing me on it

had gone away. From then on *kakar* and *sambhar* called at intervals, each call a little farther away than the last. At midnight these alarm calls ceased altogether, and the jungle settled down to that nightly period of rest ordained by Nature, when strife ceases and the jungle folk can sleep in peace. Others who have spent nights in an Indian jungle will have noticed this period of rest, which varies a little according to the season of the year and the phases of the moon, and which as a rule extends from midnight to 4 a.m. Between these hours killers sleep. And those who go in fear of them are at peace. It may be natural for carnivores to sleep from midnight to 4 a.m., but I would prefer to think that Nature had set apart these few hours so that those who go in fear of their lives can relax and be at peace.

Day was a few minutes old when, cramped in every joint, I descended from the tree and, unearthing the thermos flask Ibbey had very thoughtfully buried under a bush, indulged in a much needed cup of tea. Shortly after my two men arrived and while we were covering the kill with branches, to protect it from vultures, the tiger called three times on a hill half a mile away. As I passed through Thak on my way back to camp the greybeards of the village met me and begged me not to be discouraged by my night's failure, for, they said, they had consulted the stars and offered prayers and if the tiger did not die this day it would certainly die on the next or, may be, the day after.

A hot bath and a square meal refreshed me and at 1 p.m. I again climbed the steep hill to Thak and was told on my arrival that a *sambhar* had belled several times on the hill above the village. I had set out from camp with the intention of sitting up over a live buffalo; and, to ensure while doing so that the tiger did not feed in one place while I was waiting for him in another, I placed several sheets of newspaper near the kill I had sat over the previous night. There was a well-used cattle track through the jungle in which the villagers said the *sambhar* had called. In a tree on the side of this track I put up a rope seat, and to a root on the track I tied the buffalo. I climbed into the tree at three o'clock, and an hour later first a *kakar* and then a tiger called on the far side of the valley a thousand yards away. The buffalo had been provided with a big feed of green grass, and throughout the night it kept the bell I had tied round its neck ringing, but it failed to attract the tiger. At

daylight my men came for me and they told me that *sambhar* and *kakar* had called during the night in the deep ravine in which the boy's red cap and torn clothes had been found, and at the lower end of which we had tied up a buffalo at the request of the villagers.

When I got back to Chuka I found that Ibbey had left camp before dawn. News had been received late the previous evening that a tiger had killed a bullock eight miles up the Ladhya valley. He sat up over the kill all night without seeing anything of the tiger, and late the following evening he returned to camp.

## 4

Jean and I were having breakfast after my night in the tree over the live buffalo, when the men engaged in tying out our remaining five buffaloes came in to report that the one they had tied up at the lower end of the ravine in which my men had heard the *sambhar* and *kakar* calling the previous night was missing. While we were being given this news MacDonald, Divisional Forest Officer, who was moving camp that day from Kaladhunga to Chuka, arrived and told us he had seen the pug-marks of a tiger at the lower end of a ravine where he presumed one of our buffaloes had been tied up. These pug-marks, Mac said, were similar to those he had seen at Thak when on a previous visit he had tried to shoot the man-eater.

After breakfast, Jean and Mac went down the river to fish while I went off with Sham Singh to try to find out what had become of the missing buffalo. Beyond the broken rope and the tiger's pug-marks there was nothing to show that the buffalo had been killed. However, on casting round I found where one of the buffalos' horns had come in contact with the ground and from here on there was a well-defined blood trail. Whether the tiger lost his bearings after killing the buffalo or whether he was trying to cover up his tracks I do not know, for after taking the kill over most difficult ground for several miles he brought it back to the ravine two hundred yards from where he had started. At this point the ravine narrowed down to a bottle-neck some ten feet wide. The tiger was probably lying up with his

kill on the far side of the narrow neck, and as I intended sitting up for him all night I decided to join the anglers and share their lunch before sitting up.

After fortifying the inner man, I returned with Sham Singh and three men borrowed from the fishing party, for if I found I he kill and sat up over it it would not have been safe for Sham Singh to have gone back to camp alone. Walking well ahead of the four men I approached the bottle-neck for the second time, and as I did so the tiger started growling. The ravine here was steep and full of boulders and the tiger was growling from behind a dense screen of bushes, about twenty yards straight in front of me. An unseen tiger's growl at close range is the most terrifying sound in the jungle, and is a very definite warning to intruders not to approach any nearer. In that restricted space, and with the tiger holding a commanding position, it would have been foolish to have gone any farther. So, signalling to the men to retire, and giving them a few minutes to do so, I started to walk backwards very slowly—the only safe method of getting away from any animal with which one is anxious not to make contact. As soon as I was well clear of the bottle-neck I turned and, whistling to the men to stop, rejoined them a hundred yards farther down the ravine. I now knew exactly where the tiger was, and felt confident I would be able to deal with him; so, on rejoining the men, I told them to leave me and return to the fishing party. This, however, they were very naturally frightened to do. They believed, as I did, that the tiger they had just heard growling was a man-eater and they wanted to have the protection of my rifle. To have taken them back myself would have lost me two hours, and as we were in a sal forest and there was not a climbable tree in sight, I had of necessity to keep them with me.

Climbing the steep left bank we went straight away from the ravine for two hundred yards. Here we turned to the left and after I had paced out two hundred yards we again turned to the left and came back to the ravine a hundred yards above where we had heard the tiger growling. The tables were now turned and we held the advantage of position. I knew the tiger would not go down the ravine, for he had seen human beings in that direction, only a few minutes before; nor would he go up the ravine, for in order to do so he would have to pass us. The bank on our side was thirty feet high and devoid of undergrowth, so the only way the tiger could get out

of the position we had manoeuvred him into would be to go up the opposite hillside. For ten minutes we sat on the edge of the ravine scanning every foot of ground in front of us. Then, moving back a few paces, we went thirty yards to the left and again sat down on the edge and, as we did so, the man sitting next to me whispered 'sher', and pointed across the ravine. I could see nothing, and on asking the man how much of the tiger he could see, and to describe its position, he said he had seen its ears move and that it was near some dry leaves. A tiger's ears are not conspicuous objects at fifty yards, and as the ground was carpeted with dead leaves his description did nothing to help me locate the tiger. From the breathing of the men behind me it was evident that excitement was rising to a high pitch. Presently one of the men stood up to get a better view, and the tiger, who had been lying down facing us, got up and started to go up the hill, and as his head appeared from behind a bush I fired. My bullet, I subsequently found, went through the ruff on his neck and striking a rock splintered back, making him spring straight up into the air, and on landing he got involved with a big creeper from which he found some difficulty in freeing himself. When we saw him struggling on the ground we thought he was down for good, but when he regained his feet and galloped off Sham Singh expressed the opinion, which I shared, that he was unwounded. Leaving the men I crossed the ravine and on examining the ground found the long hairs the bullet had clipped, the splintered rock, and the torn and bitten creeper, but I found no blood.

Blood does not always flow immediately after an animal has been hit, and my reconstruction of the shot may have been faulty; so it was necessary to find the kill, for it would tell me on the morrow whether or not the tiger was wounded. Here we had some difficulty, and it was not until we had gone over the ground twice that we eventually found the kill in a pool of water four feet deep, where the tiger had presumably put it to preserve it from hornets and blowflies. Sending the three men I had borrowed back to the fishing party— it was safe to do so now — Sham Singh and I remained hidden near the kill for an hour to listen for jungle sounds and then, hearing none, returned to camp. After an early breakfast next morning Mac and I returned to the ravine and found that the tiger had removed the kill from the pool, carried it a short distance, and eaten it out leaving only the head and



hooves. This, together with the absence of blood on the ground on which he had been lying while eating, was proof that the tiger was not wounded and that he had recovered from his fright.

When we got back to camp we were informed that a cow had been killed in a wide open ravine on the far side of the Ladhya river, and that the men who had found it had covered it with branches. Ibby had not returned from his visit to the village eight miles up the Ladhya, and after lunch Mac and I went out to look at the cow. It had been covered up at midday and shortly afterwards the tiger had returned, dug it out from under the branches, and carried it away without leaving any mark of a drag. The forest here consisted of great big sal trees without any undergrowth, and it took us an hour to find the kill where the liger had hidden it under a great pile of dead leaves. In a nearby tree Mac very gallantly put up a *machan* for me while I smoked and emptied his water-bottle—the shade temperature was about a hundred and ten degrees—and after seeing me into the tree he returned to camp. An hour later a small stone rolling down the steep hill on the far side of the ravine attracted my attention, and shortly after a tigress came into view, followed by two small cubs. This was quite evidently the first occasion on which the cubs had ever been taken to a kill, and it was very interesting to see the pains the mother took to impress on them the danger of the proceeding and the great caution it was necessary to exercise. The behaviour of the cubs was as interesting as their mother's. Step by step they followed in her tracks; never trying to pass each other, or her; avoiding every obstruction that she avoided no matter how small it was, and remaining perfectly rigid when she stopped to listen, which she did every few yards. The ground was carpeted with big sal leaves as dry as tinder over which it was impossible to move silently; however, every pad was put down carefully and as carefully lifted, and as little sound as possible was made.

Crossing the ravine, the tigress, closely followed by the cubs, came towards me and passing behind my tree lay down on a flat piece of ground overlooking the kill, and about thirty yards from it. Her lying down was apparently intended as a signal to the cubs to go forward in the direction in which her nose was pointing, and this they proceeded to do. By what means the mother conveyed the information to her cubs that there was food for

them at this spot I do not know, but that she had conveyed this information to them there was no question. Passing their mother— after she had lain down— and exercising the same caution they had been made to exercise when following her, they set out with every appearance of being on a very definite quest. I have repeatedly asserted that tigers have no sense of smell, and the cubs were providing me with ample proof of that assertion. Though the kill had only been reported to us that morning the cow had actually been killed the previous day, and before hiding it under the pile of dead leaves the tigress had eaten the greater portion of it. The weather, as I have said, was intensely hot, and it was the smell that eventually enabled Mac and me to find the kill. And here, now, were two hungry cubs ranging up and down, back and forth, passing and repassing a dozen times within a yard of the kill and yet not being able to find it. It was the blowflies that disclosed its position and at length enabled them to find it. Dragging it out from under the leaves the cubs sat down together to have their meal. The tigress had watched her cubs as intently as I had and only once, when they were questing too far afield, had she spoken to them. As soon as the kill had been found the mother turned on to her hack with her legs in the air and went to sleep.



As I watched the cubs feeding I was reminded of a scene I had witnessed some years previously at the foot of Trisul. I was lying on a ridge scanning with field glasses a rock cliff opposite me for *thar*, the most sure-footed of all Himalayan goats. On a ledge halfway up the cliff a *thar* and her kid were lying asleep. Presently the *thar* got to her feet, stretched herself, and the kid immediately started to nuzzle her and feed.

After a minute or so the mother freed herself, took a few steps along the ledge, poised for a moment, and then jumped down on to another and a narrower ledge some twelve to fifteen feet below her. As soon as it was left alone the kid started running backwards and forwards, stopping every now and then to peer down at its mother, but unable to summon the courage to jump down to her for, below the few-inches-wide ledge, was a sheer drop of

a thousand feet. I was too far away to hear whether the mother was encouraging her young, but from the way her head was turned I believe she was doing so. The kid was now getting more and more agitated and, possibly fearing that it would do something foolish, the mother went to what looked like a mere crack in the vertical rock face and, climbing it, rejoined her young. Immediately on doing so she lay down, presumably to prevent the kid from feeding. After a little while she again got to her feet, allowed the kid to drink for a minute, poised carefully on the brink, and jumped down, while the kid again ran backwards and forwards above her. Seven times in the course of the next half-hour this procedure was gone through, until finally the kid, abandoning itself to its fate, jumped, and landing safely beside its mother was rewarded by being allowed to drink its fill. The lesson, to teach her young that it was safe to follow where she led, was over for that day. Instinct helps, but it is the infinite patience of the mother and the unquestioning obedience of her offspring that enable the young of all animals in the wild to grow to maturity. I regret I lacked the means, when I had the opportunity, of making cinematographic records of the different species of animals I have watched training their young, for there is nothing more interesting to be seen in a jungle.

When the cubs finished their meal they returned to their mother and she proceeded to clean them, rolling them over and licking off the blood they had acquired while feeding. When this job was finished to her entire satisfaction she set off, with the cubs following close behind, in the direction of a shallow ford in the Ladhya, for nothing remained of the kill and there was no suitable cover for her cubs on this side of the river.

I did not know, and it would have made no difference if I had, that the tigress I watched with such interest that day would later, owing to gunshot wounds, become a man-eater and a terror to all who lived or worked in the Ladhva valley and the surrounding villages.

The kill at Thak, over which I had sat the first night, had been uncovered to let the vultures eat it, and another buffalo had been tied up at the head of the valley to the west of the village and about two hundred yards from the old kill. Four mornings later the headman of Thak sent word to us that this buffalo had been killed by a tiger and carried away.

Our preparations were soon made, and after a terribly hot climb Ibbey and I reached the scene of the kill at about midday. The tiger, after killing the buffalo and breaking a very strong rope, had picked up the kill and gone straight down into the valley. Telling the two men we had brought to carry our lunch to keep close behind us, we set off to follow the drag. It soon became apparent that the tiger was making for some definite spot, for he led us for two miles through dense undergrowth, down steep banks, through beds of nettles and raspberry bushes, over and under fallen trees, and over great masses of rock until finally he deposited the kill in a small hollow under a box tree shaped like an umbrella. The buffalo had been killed the previous night and the fact that the tiger had left it without having a meal was disquieting. However, this was to a great extent offset by the pains he had taken in getting the kill to this spot, and if all went well there was every reason to hope that he would return to his kill, for, from the teeth-marks on the buffalo's neck, we knew he was the man-eater we were looking for and not just an ordinary tiger.

Our hot walk up to Thak and subsequent descent down the densely wooded hillside, over difficult ground, had left us in a bath of sweat, and while we rested in the hollow having lunch and drinking quantities of tea, I cast my eyes round for a convenient tree on which to sit and, if necessary in which to pass the night. Growing on the outer edge of the hollow and leaning away from the hill at an angle of forty-five degrees was a ficus tree. This, starting life in some decayed part of a giant of the forest, had killed the parent tree by weaving a trellis round it, and this trellis was now in course of coalescing to form a trunk for the parasite. Ten feet from the ground, and where the trellis had stopped and the parent tree had rotted and fallen away, there appeared to be a comfortable seat on which I decided to sit.

Lunch eaten and a cigarette smoked, Ibby took our two men sixty yards to the right and sent them up a tree to shake the branches and pretend they were putting up a machan, to distract the tiger's attention in case he was lying up close by and watching us, while I as silently as possible climbed into the *ficus* tree. The seat I had selected sloped forward and was cushioned with rotten wood and dead leaves and, fearing that if I brushed them off the sound and movement might be detected by the tiger, I left them as they were and sat down on them, hoping devoutly that there were no snakes in the hollow trunk below me or scorpions in the dead leaves. Placing my feet in an opening in the trellis, to keep from slipping forward, I made myself as comfortable as conditions permitted, and when I had done so Ibby called the men off the tree and went away talking to them in a loud voice.

The tree in which I had elected to sit was, as I have already said, leaning outwards at an angle of forty-five degrees, and ten feet immediately below me there was a flat bit of ground about ten feet wide and twenty feet long. From this flat piece of ground the hill fell steeply away and was overgrown with tall grass and dense patches of brushwood, beyond which I could hear a stream running; an ideal place for a tiger to lie up in.

Ibby and the two men had been gone about fifteen minutes when a red monkey on the far side of the valley started barking to warn the jungle folk of the presence of a tiger. From the fact that this monkey had not called when we were coming down the hill, following the drag, it was evident that the tiger had not moved off at our approach and that he was now coming to investigate— as tigers do— the sounds he had heard in the vicinity of his kill. Monkeys are blessed with exceptionally good eyesight, and though the one that was calling was a quarter of a mile away, it was quite possible that the tiger he was calling at was close to me.

I was sitting facing the hill with the kill to my left front, and the monkey had only called eight times when I heard a dry stick snap down the steep hillside behind me. Turning my head to the right and looking through the trellis, which on this side extended a little above my head, I saw the tiger standing and looking in the direction of my tree, from a distance of about

forty yards. For several minutes he stood looking alternately in my direction and then in the direction of the tree the two men had climbed, until eventually, deciding to come in my direction, he started up the steep hillside. It would not have been possible for a human being to have got over that steep and difficult ground without using his hands and without making considerable noise, but the tiger accomplished the feat without making a sound. The nearer he came to the flat ground the more cautious he became and the closer he kept his belly to the ground. When he was near the top of the bank he very slowly raised his head, took a long look at the tree the men had climbed, and satisfied that it was not tenanted sprang up on to the flat ground and passed out of sight under me. I expected him to reappear on my left and go towards the kill, and while I was waiting for him to do so I heard the dry leaves under the tree being crushed as he lay down on them.

For the next quarter of an hour I sat perfectly still, and as no further sounds came to me from the tiger I turned my head to the right, and craning my neck looked through an opening in the trellis, and saw the tiger's head. If I had been able to squeeze a tear out of my eye and direct it through the opening it would, believe, have landed plumb on his nose. His chin was resting on the ground and his eyes were closed. Presently he opened them and blinked a few times to drive away the flies, then closed them again and went to sleep. Regaining my position I now turned my head to the left. On this side there was no trellis nor were there any branches against which I could brace myself, and when I had craned my neck as far as I could without losing my balance I looked down and found I could see most of the tiger's tail, and a part of one hind leg.

The situation needed consideration. The bole of the tree against which I had my back was roughly three feet thick and afforded ideal cover, so there was no possibility of the tiger seeing me. That he would go to the kill if not disturbed was certain; the question was, when would he go? It was a hot afternoon, but the spot he had selected to lie on was in deep shade from my tree and, further, there was a cool breeze blowing up the valley. In these pleasant conditions he might sleep for hours and not approach the kill until day light had gone, taking with it my chance of getting a shot. The risk of waiting on the tiger's pleasure could not be taken, therefore, for apart from

the reason given the time at our disposal was nearly up and this might be the last chance I would get of killing the tiger, while on that chance might depend the lives of many people. Waiting for a shot being inadvisable, then, there remained the possibility of dealing with the tiger where he lay. There were several openings in the trellis on my right through which I could have inserted the barrel of my rifle, but having done this it would not have been possible to depress the muzzle of the rifle sufficiently to get the sights to bear on the tiger's head. To have stood up, climbed the trellis, and fired over the top of it would not have been difficult. But this could not have been done without making a certain amount of noise, for the dry leaves I was sitting on would have crackled when relieved of my weight, and within ten feet of me was an animal with the keenest hearing of any in the jungle. A shot at the head end of the tiger not being feasible, there remained the tail end.

When I had both my hands on the rifle and craned my neck to the left, I had been able to see most of the tiger's tail and a portion of one hind leg. By releasing my right hand from the rifle and getting a grip of the trellis I found I could lean out far enough to see one-third of the tiger. If I could maintain this position after releasing my hold, it would be possible to disable him. The thought of disabling an animal, and a sleeping one at that, simply because he occasionally liked a change of diet was hateful. Sentiment, however, where a man-eater was concerned was out of place. I had been trying for days to shoot this tiger to save further loss of human life, and now that I had a chance of doing so the fact that I would have to break his back before killing him would not justify my throwing away that chance. So the killing would have to be done no matter how unpleasant the method might be, and the sooner it was done the better, for in bringing his kill to this spot the tiger had laid a two-mile-long scent trail, and a hungry bear finding that trail might at any moment take the decision out of my hands. Keeping my body perfectly rigid I gradually released my hold of the trellis, got both hands on the rifle, and fired a shot behind and under me which I have no desire ever to repeat. When I pressed the trigger of the 450/400 high-velocity rifle, the butt was pointing to heaven and I was looking under, not over, the sights. The recoil injured but did not break either my fingers or my wrist, as I had feared it would, and as the tiger

threw the upper part of his body round and started to slide down the hill on his back, I swung round on my seat and fired the second barrel into his chest. I should have felt less a murderer if, at my first shot, the tiger had stormed and raved but— being the big-hearted animal that he was— he never opened his mouth, and died at my second shot without having made a sound.





Ibby had left me with the intention of sitting up in the *jamun* tree over the buffalo which had been killed four days previously and which the vultures had, for some unknown reason, not eaten. He thought that if the tiger had seen me climbing into the *ficus* tree it might abandon the kill over which I was sitting and go back to its old kill at Thak and give him a shot. On hearing my two shots he came hurrying back to see if I needed his help, and I met him half a mile from the *ficus* tree. Together we returned to the scene of the killing to examine the tiger. He was a fine big male in the prime of life and in perfect condition, and would have measured— if we had had anything to measure him with— nine feet six inches between pegs, or nine feet ten over curves. And the right canine tooth in his lower jaw was broken. Later I found several pellets of buckshot embedded in different parts of his body.

The tiger was too heavy for the four of us to carry back to camp so we left him where he lay, after covering him up with grass, branches, and deadwood heaped over with big stones, to protect him from bears. Word travelled round that night that the man-eating tiger was dead and when we carried him to the loot of the *ficus* tree next morning to skin him, more than a hundred men and boys crowded round to see him. Among the latter was the ten-year-old brother of the Chuka man-eater's last human victim.





## *The Talla Des Man-Eater*

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### 1

NOWHERE ALONG THE FOOTHILLS of the Himalayas is there a more beautiful setting for a camp than under the Flame of the Forest trees at Bindukhera, when they are in full bloom. If you can picture white tents under a canopy of orange-coloured bloom; a multitude of brilliantly plumaged red and gold minivets, golden orioles, rose-headed parakeets, golden backed woodpeckers, and wire-crested drongos flitting from tree to tree and shaking down the bloom until the ground round the tents resembled a rich orange-coloured carpet; densely wooded foothills in the background topped by ridge upon rising ridge of the Himalayas, and they in turn topped by the eternal snows, then, and only then, will you have some idea of our camp at Bindukhera one February morning in the year 1929.

Bindukhera, which is only a name for the camping ground, is on the western edge of a wide expanse of grassland some twelve miles long and ten miles wide. When Sir Henry Ramsay was king of Kumaon the plain was under intensive cultivation, but at the time of my story there were only three

small villages, each with a few acres of cultivation dotted along the banks of the sluggish stream that meanders down the length of the plain. The grass on the plain had been burnt a few weeks before our arrival, leaving islands of varying sizes where the ground was damp and the grass too green to burn. It was on these islands that we hoped to find the game that had brought us to Bindukhera for a week's shooting. I had shot over this ground for ten years and knew every foot of it, so the running of the shoot was left to me.

Shooting from the back of a well-trained elephant on the grasslands of the Tarai is one of the most pleasant forms of sport I know of. No matter how long the day may be, every moment of it is packed with excitement and interest, for in addition to the variety of game to be shot— on a good day I have seen eighteen varieties brought to bag ranging from quail and snipe to leopard and swamp deer— there is a great wealth of bird life to ordinarily be seen when walking through grass on foot.

There were nine guns and five spectators in camp on the first day of our shoot that February morning, and after an early breakfast we mounted our elephants and formed a line, with a pad elephant between every two guns. Taking my position in the centre of the line, with four guns and four pad elephants on either side of me, we set off due south with the flanking gun on the right— fifty yards in advance of the line— to cut off birds that rose out of range of the other guns and were making for the forest on the right. If you are ever given choice of position in a line of elephants on a mixed-game shoot select a flank, but only if you are good with both gun and rifle. Game put up by a line of elephants invariably try to break out at a flank, and one of the most difficult objects to hit is a bird or an animal that has been missed by others.

When the air is crisp and laden with all the sweet scents that are to be smelt in an Indian jungle in the early morning, it goes to the head like champagne, and has the same effect on birds, with the result that both guns and birds tend to be too quick off the mark. A too eager gun and a wild bird do not produce a heavy bag, and the first few minutes of all glorious days are usually as unproductive as the last few minutes when muscles are

tired and eyes strained. Birds were plentiful that morning, and, after the guns had settled down, shooting improved and in our first beat along the edge of the forest we picked up five peafowl, three red jungle fowl, ten black partridges, four grey partridges, two bush quails, and three hares. A good *sambhar* had been put up but he gained the shelter of the forest before rifles could be got to bear on him.



Where a tongue of forest extended out on to the plain for a few hundred yards, I halted the line. This forest was famous for the number of peafowl and jungle fowl that were always to be found in it, but as the ground was cut up by a number of deep *nullahs* that made it difficult to maintain a straight line, I decided not to take the elephants through it, for one of the guns was inexperienced and was shooting from the back of an elephant that morning for the first time. It was in this forest — when Wyndham and I some years previously were looking for a tiger— that I saw for the first time a cardinal bat. These beautiful bats, which look like gorgeous butterflies as they flit from cover to cover, are, as far as I know, only to be found in heavy elephant-grass.

After halting the line I made the elephants turn their heads to the east and move off in single file. When the last elephant had cleared the ground over which we had just beaten, I again halted them and made them turn their heads to the north. We were now facing the Himalayas, and hanging in the sky directly in front of us was a brilliantly lit white cloud that looked solid enough for angels to dance on.

The length of a line of seventeen elephants depends on the ground that is being beaten. Where the grass was heavy I shortened the line to a hundred yards, and where it was light I extended it to twice that length. We had beaten up to the north for a mile or so, collecting thirty more birds and a leopard, when a ground owl got up in front of the line. Several guns were raised and lowered when it was realized what the bird was. These ground owls, which live in abandoned pangolin and porcupine burrows, are about twice the size of a partridge, look white on the wing, and have longer legs

than the ordinary run of owls. When flushed by a line of elephants they fly low for fifty to a hundred yards before alighting. This I believe they do to allow the line to clear their burrows, for when flushed a second time they invariably fly over the line and back to the spot from where they originally rose. The owl we flushed that morning, however, did not behave as these birds usually do, for after flying fifty to sixty yards in a straight line it suddenly started to gain height by going round and round in short circles. The reason for this was apparent a moment later when a peregrine falcon, flying at great speed, came out of the forest on the left. Unable to regain the shelter of its burrow the owl was now making a desperate effort to keep above the falcon. With rapid wing beats he was spiralling upwards, while the falcon on widespread wings was circling up and up to get above his quarry. All eyes, including those of themahouts, were now on the exciting flight, so I halted the line.

It is difficult to judge heights when there is nothing to make a comparison with. At a rough guess the two birds had reached a height of a thousand feet, when the owl— still moving in circles— started to edge away towards the big white cloud, and one could imagine the angels suspending their dance and urging it to make one last effort to reach the shelter of their cloud. The falcon was not slow to see the object of this manoeuvre, and he too was now beating the air with his wings and spiralling up in ever-shortening circles. Would the owl make it or would he now, as the falcon approached nearer to him, lose his nerve and plummet down in a vain effort to reach mother earth and the sanctuary of his burrow? Field glasses were now out for those who needed them, and up and down the line excited exclamations— in two languages— were running.

‘Oh! he can’t make it.’

‘Yes he can, he can.’

‘Only a little way to go now.’

‘But look, look, the falcon is gaining on him.’ And then, suddenly, only one bird was to be seen against the cloud. ‘Well done! well done! Shahbashl

shahbash!’ The owl had made it, and while hats were being waved and hands were being clapped, the falcon in a long graceful glide came back to the *semul* tree from which he had started.

The reactions of human beings to any particular event are unpredictable. Fifty-four birds and four animals had been shot that morning— and many more missed— without a qualm or the batting of an eyelid. And now, guns, spectators, and mahouts were unreservedly rejoicing that a ground owl had escaped the talons of a peregrine falcon.

At the northern end of the plain I again turned the line of elephants south, and beat down along the right bank of the stream that provided irrigation water for the three villages. Here on the damp ground the grass was unburnt and heavy, and rifles were got ready, for there were many hog deer and swamp deer in this area, and there was also a possibility of putting up another leopard.

We had gone along the bank of the stream for about a mile, picking up five more peafowl, four cock florican— hens were barred— three snipe, and a hog deer with very good horns when the accidental (please turn your eyes away, Recording Angel) discharge of a heavy high-velocity rifle in the hands of a spectator sitting behind me in my howdah, scorched the inner lining of my left ear and burst the eardrum. For me the rest of that February day was torture. After a sleepless night I excused myself on the plea that I had urgent work to attend to (again, please, Recording Angel) and at dawn, while the camp was asleep, I set out on a twenty-five-mile walk to my home at Kaladhungi.

The doctor at Kaladhungi, a keen young man who had recently completed his medical training, confirmed my fears that my eardrum had been destroyed. A month later we moved up to our summer home at Naini Tal, and at the Ramsay Hospital (now Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital) I received further confirmation of this diagnosis from Colonel Barber, Civil Surgeon of Naini Tal. Days passed, and it became apparent that abscesses were forming in my head. My condition was distressing my two sisters as much as it was distressing me, and as the hospital was unable to do

anything to relieve me I decided— much against the wishes of my sisters and the advice of Colonel Barber— to go away.

I have mentioned this ‘accident’ not with the object of enlisting sympathy but because it has a very important bearing on the story of the Talla Des man-eater which I shall now relate.

## 2

Bill Baynes and Ham Vivian were Deputy Commissioners of, respectively, Almora and Naini Tal in the year 1929, and both were suffering from man-eaters, the former from the Talla Des man-eating tiger, and the latter from the Chowgarh man-eating tiger.

I had promised Vivian that I would try to shoot his tiger first, but as it had been less active during the winter months than Baynes’s, I decided, with Vivian’s approval, to try for the other first. The pursuit of this tiger would, I hoped, tide me over my bad time and enable me to adjust myself to my new condition. So to Talla Des I went.

My story concerns the Talla Des tiger, and I have refrained from telling it until I had written *Jungle Lore*. For without first reading *Jungle Lore*, and knowing that I had learnt— when a boy and later— how to walk in a jungle and use a rifle, and the credulity of all who were not present in Kumaon at that time would have been strained and this, after my previous stories had been accepted at their face value, was the last thing I desired.

My preparations were soon made and on 4 April I left Naini Tal accompanied by six Garhvvalis, among whom were Madho Singh and Ram Singh, a cook named Elahai, and a Brahmin, Ganga Ram, who did odd jobs and was very keen to go with me. Walking the fourteen miles down to Kathgodam we caught the evening train and, travelling through Bareilly and Pilibhit, arrived at noon next day at Tanakpur. Here I was met by thepeshkar, who informed me that a boy had been killed the previous day by the Talla Des man-eater, and that under Baynes’s orders two young buffaloes— to be used as bait— had been dispatched for me via

Champawat to Talla Des. After my men had cooked and eaten their food and I had breakfasted at the *dak* bungalow, we started off in good heart to try to walk the twenty-four miles to Kaladhunga (not to be confused with Kaladhungi) the same night.

The first twelve miles of the road— through Baramdeo to the foot of the sacred Purnagiri mountain— runs through forest most of the way. At the foot of the mountain the road ends, and there is the choice of two tracks to Kaladhunga. One, the longer, goes steeply up the left-hand side of the mountain to the Purnagiri temples, over a shoulder of the mountain, and down to Kaladhunga. The other track follows the alignment of the tramway line made by Collier when extracting the million cubic feet of sal timber that I have already spoken of. Collier's tramline— where it ran for four miles through the Sarda river gorge— has long since been washed away, but portions of the track he blasted across the perpendicular rock face of the mountain still remain. The going over this portion of the track was very difficult for my heavily laden Garhwalis, and night came on when we were only halfway through the gorge. Finding a suitable place on which to camp for the night was not easy, but after rejecting several places made dangerous by falling stones we eventually found a narrow shelf where the overhanging rock offered measure of safety. Here we decided to spend the night, and after I had eaten my dinner and while the men were cooking their food with driftwood brought up from the river I undressed and lay down on my camp bed, the only article of camp equipment, excluding a washbasin and a forty-pound tent, that I had brought with me.

The day had been hot and we had covered some sixteen miles since detraining at Tanakpur. I was comfortably tired and was enjoying an after-dinner cigarette, when on the hill on the far side of the river I suddenly saw three lights appear. The forests in Nepal are burnt annually, the burning starting in April. Now, on seeing the lights, I concluded that the wind blowing down the gorge had fanned to flame the smouldering embers in some dead wood. As I idly watched these fires two more appeared a little above them. Presently the left-hand one of these two new fires moved slowly down the hill and merged into the central one of the original three. I now realized that what I had assumed were fires, were not fires but lights,



all of a uniform size of about two feet in diameter, burning steadily without a flicker or trace of smoke. When presently more lights appeared, some to the left and others farther up the hill, an explanation to account for them presented itself. A potentate out on *shikar* had evidently lost some article he valued and had sent men armed with lanterns to search for it. Admittedly a strange explanation, but many strange things happen on the far side of that snow-fed river.

My men were as interested in the lights as I was, and as the river below us flowed without a ripple and the night was still, I asked them if they could hear voices or any other sounds— the distance across was about a hundred and fifty yards— but they said they could hear nothing. Speculation as to what was happening on the opposite hill was profitless, and as we were tired out after our strenuous day the camp was soon wrapped in slumber. Once during the night a *ghooral* sneezed in alarm on the cliff above us, and a little later a leopard called.

A long march and a difficult climb lay before us. I had warned my men that we would make an early start, and light was just showing in the east when I was given a cup of hot tea. Breaking camp, when only a few pots and pans had to be put away and a camp bed dismantled, was soon accomplished. As the cook and my Garhwalis streamed off in single file down a goat track into a deep ravine, which in Collier's clay had been spanned by an iron bridge, I turned my eyes to the hill on which we had seen the lights. The sun was not far from rising, and distant objects were now clearly visible. From crest to water's edge and from water's edge to crest I scanned every foot of the hill, first with my naked eyes and then with field glasses. Not a sign of any human being could I see, or, reverting to my first theory, was there any smouldering wood, and it only needed a glance to see that the vegetation in this area had not been burnt for a year. The hill was rock from top to bottom, a few stunted trees and bushes growing where roothold had been found in crack or cranny. Where the lights had appeared was a perpendicular rock where no human being, unless suspended from above, could possibly have gone.

Nine days later, my mission to the hill people accomplished, I camped for a night at Kaladhunga. For a lover of nature, or for a keen fisherman, there are few places in Kumaon to compare with Kaladhunga. From the bungalow Collier built when extracting the timber Nepal gave India, the land slopes gently down in a series of benches to the Sarda river. On these benches, where crops grew in the bygone days, there is now a luxuriant growth of grass. Here *sambhar* and *cheetal* are to be seen feeding morning and evening, and in the beautiful forests behind the bungalow live leopards and tigers, and a wealth of bird life including peafowl, jungle fowl, and *kalege* pheasants. In the big pools and runs below the bungalow some of the best fishing in the Sarda river is to be had, either on a spinning rod with plug bait or on a light rod with salmon fly or fly spoon.

At crack of dawn next morning we left Kaladhunga, Ganga Ram taking the mountain track to Purnagiri and the rest of us the shorter way through the Sarda gorge. Ganga Ram's mission — which would entail an additional ten-miles walk— was to present our thank-offerings to the sacred Purnagiri shrine. Before he left me I instructed him to find out all he could, from the priests who served the shrine, about the lights we had seen when on our way up to Talla Des. When he rejoined me that evening at Tanakpur he gave me the following information, which he had gleaned from the priests and from his own observations.

Purnagiri, dedicated to the worship of the Goddess Bhagbatti and visited each year by tens of thousands of pilgrims, is accessible by two tracks. These, one from Baramdeo and the other from Kaladhunga, meet on the northern face of the mountain a short distance below the crest. At the junction of the tracks is situated the less sacred of the two Purnagiri shrines. The more sacred shrine is higher up and to the left. This holy of holies can only be reached by going along a narrow crack, or fault, running across the face of a more or less perpendicular rock cliff. Nervous people, children, and the aged are carried across the cliff in a basket slung on the back of a hillman. Only those whom the Goddess favours are able to reach the upper shrine; the others are struck blind and have to make their offerings at the lower shrine.

*Puja* (prayer) at the upper shrine starts at sunrise and ends at midday. After this hour no one is permitted to pass the lower shrine. Near the upper and more sacred shrine is a pinnacle of rock a hundred feet high, the climbing of which is forbidden by the Goddess. In the days of long ago a *sadhu*, more ambitious than his fellows, climbed the pinnacle with the object of putting himself on an equality with the Goddess. Incensed at his disregard of her orders, the Goddess hurled the *sadhu* from the pinnacle to the hill on the far side of the snow-fed river. It is this *sadhu* who, banished for ever from Purnagiri, worships the Goddess two thousand feet above him by lighting lamps to her. These votive lights only appear at certain times (we saw them on 5 April) and are only visible to favoured people. This favour was accorded to me and to the men with me, because I was on a mission to the hillfolk over whom the Goddess watches.

That in brief was the information regarding the light which Ganga Ram brought back from Purnagiri and imparted to me while we were waiting for our train at Tanakpur. Some weeks later I received a visit from the Rawal (High Priest) of Purnagiri. He had come to see me about an article I had published in a local paper on the subject of the Purnagiri lights, and to congratulate me on being the only European ever to have been privileged to see them. In my article I gave the explanation for the lights as I have given it in these pages, and I added that if my readers were unable to accept this explanation and desired to find one for themselves, they should bear the following points in mind:

The lights did not appear simultaneously.

They were of a uniform size (about two feet in diameter).

They were not affected by wind.

They were able to move from one spot to another.

The High Priest was emphatic that the lights were an established fact which no one could dispute—in this I was in agreement with him for I had seen them for myself—and that no other explanation than the one I had given could be advanced to account for them.

The following year I was fishing the Sarda with Sir Malcolm (now Lord) Hailey, who was Governor of the United Provinces at the time. Sir Malcolm had seen my article and as we approached the gorge he asked me to point out the spot where I had seen the lights. We had four *dhimas* (fishermen) with us who were piloting the *sarnis* (inflated skins) on which we were floating down the river from one fishing stand to the next. These men were part of a gang of twenty engaged by a contractor in floating pine sleepers from the high-level forests in Kumaon and Nepal to the boom at Baramdeo. This was a long, difficult, and very dangerous task, calling for great courage and a thorough knowledge of the river and its many hazards.

Below the shelf blasted out of the cliff by Collier, on which my men and I had spent the night when on our way up to Talla Des, was a narrow sandy beach. Here the *dhimas* at my request brought the *sarnis* to the bank, and we went ashore. After I had pointed out where the lights had appeared, and traced their movements on the hill, Sir Malcolm said the *dhimas* could possibly provide an explanation, or at least throw some light on the subject. So he turned to them—he knew the correct approach to make to an Indian when seeking information and could speak the language perfectly—and elicited the following information. Their homes were in the Kangra Valley where they had some cultivation, but not sufficient to support them. They earned their living by floating sleepers down the Sarda river for Thakur Dan Singh Bist. They knew every foot of the river as far down as Baramdeo, for they had been up and down it countless times. They knew this particular gorge very well, for there were backwaters in it that hung up the sleepers and gave them a great deal of trouble. They had never seen anything unusual in this part of the river in the way of lights, or anything else.

As he turned away from the *dhimas* I asked Sir Malcolm to put one more question to them. Had they in all the years they had been working on the Sarda ever spent a night in the gorge? Their answer to this question was a very emphatic No! Questioned further they said that not only had they never spent a night in the gorge but that they had never heard of anyone else ever having done so. The reason they gave for this was that the gorge was haunted by evil spirits.

Two thousand feet above us a narrow crack, worn smooth by the naked feet of generations upon generations of devotees, ran for fifty yards across a perpendicular rock cliff where there was no handhold of any kind. In spite of the precautions taken by the priests to safeguard the lives of pilgrims, casualties while negotiating that crack were heavy until H. H. The Maharaja of Mysore provided funds a few years ago for a steel cable to be stretched across the face of the cliff, from the lower shrine to the upper.

So there well might be spirits at the foot of that cliff but not, I think, evil ones.

### 3

Now to get back to my story.

Ganga Ram, who could cover the ground as fast as any man in Kumaon, had stayed back with me to carry my camera, and we caught up with the cook and the six Garhvvalis two miles from where we had spent the night. For the next six hours we walked with never a pause, at times through dense forests and at times along the bank of the Sarda river. Our way took us through Kaladhunga and through Chuka to the foot of the mountain, on the far side of which was our objective, the hunting grounds of the Talla Des man-eater. At the foot of the mountain we halted for two hours—to cook and eat our midday meal—before essaying the four-thousand-foot climb.

In the afternoon, with the hot April sun blazing down on our backs and without a single tree to shade us, we started on one of the steepest and most exhausting climbs my men and I had ever undertaken. The so-called road was only a rough track which went straight up the face of the mountain without a single hairpin bend to ease the gradient. After repeated and many halts we arrived at sunset at a little hamlet, a thousand feet from the crest. We had been warned at Chuka to avoid this hamlet, for, being the only inhabited place on the southern face of the mountain, it was visited regularly by the man-eater. However, man-eater or no man-eater, we could go no farther, so to the hamlet—which was a few hundred yards from the track—we went. The two families in the hamlet were delighted to see us

and after we had rested and eaten our evening meal, my men were provided with accommodation behind locked doors, while I settled down on my camp bed under a tree that sheltered the tiny spring which provided the two families with drinking water, with a rifle and a lantern to keep me company.

Lying on my bed that night I had ample time to review the situation. Instructions had been issued by Bill Baynes to headmen of villages not to disturb any human or other kills, pending my arrival. The boy the peshkarof Tanakpur had told me about, had been killed on the fourth and it was now the night of the sixth. Since leaving the train at Tanakpur we had not spared ourselves in an effort to try to get to the scene of the killing with as little delay as possible. I knew the tiger would have eaten out his kill before our arrival and that, if he was not disturbed, he would probably remain in the vicinity for a day or two. I had hoped when leaving camp that morning that we would reach our destination in time to tie out one of the young buffaloes, but the climb up from the Sarda had been too much for us. Regrettable as the loss of one day was, it could not be helped, and I could only hope that if the tiger had moved away from the scene of his kill, he had not gone far. One of the disadvantages I had to contend with was that I did not know this part of Kumaon. The tiger had been operating for eight years and had made one hundred and fifty human kills, so it was reasonable to assume he was working over a very large area. If contact with him was once lost it might be weeks before it could again be made. However, worrying over what the tiger had done, or what he might do, was profitless, so I went to sleep.

I was to make an early start and it was still quite dark when Ganga Ram roused me by lighting the lantern which had gone out during the night. While breakfast was being got ready I had a bath at the spring, and the sun was just rising over the Nepal mountains when, having cleaned and oiled my .275 Rigby Mauser rifle and put five rounds in the magazine, I was ready to start. Inter-village communication had been interrupted by the man-eater and the two men in the hamlet had not heard about the tiger's last kill, so they were unable to give me any information as to the direction, or the distance, we would have to go. Not knowing when my men would get their next meal I told them to have a good one now and to follow me when

they were ready, keeping close together and selecting open places to sit down in when they wanted to rest.

Rejoining the track up which we had laboured the previous evening, I halted for a spell to admire the view. Below me the valley of the Sarda was veiled in shadow and a wisp of mist showed where the river wound in and out through the foothills to emerge at Tanakpur. Beyond Tanakpur the eye could follow the river as a gleaming silver ribbon, until lost to sight on the horizon. Chuka was in shadow and partly obscured by mist, but I could see the path winding up to Thak, every foot of which I was to know when hunting the Thak man-eater ten years later. Thak village, gifted hundreds of years ago by the Chand Rajas of Kumaon to the priests who see the Purnagiri shrines, was bathed in the morning sun, as was also the pinnacle of Purnagiri.

Twenty-five years have come and gone since I turned away from that view to complete the last stage of my journey to Talla Des— a long period, in which much has happened. But time does not efface events graven deep on memory's tablets, and the events of the five days I spent hunting the man-eating tiger of Talla Des are as clear-cut and fresh in my memory today as they were twenty-five years ago.

On the far side of the hill I found the track that I was on joined a quite good forest road some six feet wide, running east and west. Here I was faced with a dilemma, for there were no villages in sight and I did not know in which direction to go. Eventually, on the assumption that the road to the east could only take me out of my way as far as the Sarda, I decided to try it first.

Given the option of selecting my own time and place for a walk anywhere, I would unhesitatingly select a morning in early April on the northern face of a well-wooded hill in the Himalayas. In April all Nature is at her best; deciduous trees are putting out new leaves, each of a different shade of green or bronze; early violets, buttercups, and rhododendrons are giving way to later primulas, larkspurs, and orchids; and the birds— thrushes, babblers, minivets, tits, and a host of others— that migrated to the

foothills for the winter are back on their nesting grounds and vie with each other in their joyous mating songs. Walking carefree and at ease in a forest in which there is no danger, only those objects and sounds which please the senses are looked at and listened to with any degree of attention, and all the other less-arresting sights and sounds blend together to form a pleasing whole. When there is danger from a man-eating tiger, however, the carefree feeling gives way to intense awareness.

Danger not only adds zest to all forms of sport, it also tends to sharpen the faculties and to bring into focus all that is to be seen and heard in a forest. Danger that is understood, and which you are prepared to face, does not detract in any way from pleasure. The bank of violets does not lose any of its beauty because the rock beyond it may shelter a hungry tiger, and the song of the black-headed sibia, poured out from the topmost branch of an oak tree, is none the less pleasing because a scimitar-babbler at the foot of the tree is warning the jungle folk of the presence of danger.

Fear may not be a heritage to some fortunate few, but I am not of their number. After a lifelong acquaintance with wild life I am no less afraid of a tiger's teeth and claws today than I was the day that a tiger shooed Magog and me out of the jungle in which he wanted to sleep. But to counter that fear and hold it in check I now have the experience that I lacked in those early years. Where formerly I looked for danger all round me and was afraid of every sound I heard, I now knew where to look for danger, and what sounds to ignore or pay special attention to. And, further, where there was uncertainty where a bullet would go, there was now a measure of certainty that it would go in the direction I wanted it to. Experience engenders confidence, and without these two very important assets the hunting of a man-eating tiger on foot, and alone, would be a very unpleasant way of committing suicide.

The forest road I was walking on that April morning ran through an area in which a man-eating tiger was operating and had been used by the tiger frequently, as was evident from the scratch marks on it. In addition to these marks, none of which was fresh enough to show the pug-marks of the tiger which had made them, there were many tracks of leopard, sambhar, bear,



kakar, and pig. Of birds there were many varieties, and of flowers there was great profusion, the most beautiful of which was the white butterfly orchid. These orchids hang down in showers and veil the branch or the trunk of the tree to which their roots are attached. One of the most artistic nests I have ever seen was that of a Himalayan black bear, made in a tree on which orchids were growing. A big oak tree had snapped off, either by weight of snow or in a storm, some forty feet above ground. Where the break had taken place a ring of branches, the thickness of a man's arm, had sprouted out at right angles to the trunk. Here moss had grown and in the moss butterfly orchids had found root-hold. It was here among these orchids that a bear had made its nest by bending over and pressing down the branches on to the broken-off tree trunk. The trees selected by bears in which to make their nests are of the variety whose branches will bend without snapping. The nests have nothing to do with family affairs and I have seen them at altitudes of from two thousand to eight thousand feet, At the lower altitudes, to which bears descend during the winter months to feed on wild plums and honey, the nests give protection from ants and flies, and at the higher altitudes they enable the animals to bask undisturbed in the sun.

When a road is interesting its length does not register on one's consciousness. I had been walking for about an hour when the forest ended and I came out on a grassy ridge overlooking a village. My approach over the open ground was observed, and when I reached the village the whole population appeared to have turned out to greet me. I often wonder whether in any other part of the world a stranger whose business was not known, arriving unexpectedly at a remote village, would be assured of the same welcome and hospitality as he would receive at any village throughout the length and breadth of Kumaon. I was possibly the first white man who had ever approached that village alone and on foot, and yet, by the time I reached the assembled people, a square of carpet had been produced, a morha (rush seat) placed on it, and I had hardly sat down before a brass vessel containing milk was placed in my hands. A lifelong association with the hillfolk enables me to understand the different dialects that are spoken in Kumaon and, what is just as important, to follow their every thought. As I had arrived armed with a rifle it was taken for granted that I had come to rid them of the man-eater, but what was puzzling them was my arrival on

foot at that early hour when the nearest bungalow at which I could have spent the night was thirty miles away.

Cigarettes, passed round while I was drinking the milk, loosened tongues, and after I had answered the many questions put to me I put a few of my own. The name of the village, I learnt, was Tamali. The village had suffered for many years from the man-eater. Some said eight years and others said ten, but all were agreed that the man-eater had made its appearance the year that Bachi Singh had cut off his toes while splitting wood with an axe, and Dan Singh's black bullock, for which he had paid thirty rupees, had fallen down the hill and got killed. The last person killed at Tamali by the man-eater had been Kundan's mother. She had been killed on the twentieth day of the previous month (March), while working with other women in a field below the village. No one knew whether the tiger was a male or a female, but all knew it was a very big animal, the fear of which was now so great that the outlying fields were no longer being cultivated and no one was willing to go to Tanakpur to get the food that was needed for the village. The tiger was never absent from Tamali for long, and if I stayed with them, which they begged me to do, I would have a better chance of shooting it than anywhere else in Talla Des.



To leave people who place implicit trust in you to the tender mercies of a man-eater is not easy. However, my reason for doing so was accepted, and, after I had assured the fifty or more people gathered round me that I would return to Tamali at the first opportunity, I bade them goodbye and set off to try to find the village where the last kill had taken place.

At the point where the track from the hamlet met the forest road I removed the sign I had placed on the road to indicate to my men that I had gone east, and replaced in on the road to the west, and, to ensure that there would be no mistake, I put a 'road closed' sign on the road to the east. The two signs I have mentioned are known throughout the hills, and, though I

had not told my men that I would use them, I knew they would understand that I had laid them and would interpret them correctly. The first sign consists of a small branch laid in the middle of the road, held in position with a stone or bit of wood, with the leaves pointing in the direction in which it is intended that the person following should go. The second sign consists of two branches crossed, in the form of an X.

The road to the west was level most of the way and ran through a forest of giant oak trees standing knee-deep in bracken and maidenhair fern. Where there were openings in this forest there were magnificent views of hills upon rising hills backed by the snowy range extending to east and west as far as the eye could see.

## 4

After going for some four miles due west the forest road turned to the north and crossed the head of a valley. Flowing down the valley was a crystal-clear stream which had its birth in the dense oak forest on the hill that towered above me on my left. Crossing the stream on stepping-stones, and going up a short rise, I came out on an open stretch of ground on the far side of which was a village. Some girls coming down from the village on their way to the stream caught sight of me as I came out on the open ground, and they called out in great excitement, 'The Sahib has come! The Sahib has come!' The cry was caught up from house to house and before I reached the village I was surrounded by an excited throng of men, women, and children.

From the headman I learnt that the name of the village was Talla Kote. That a *patwari* had arrived two days previously (5 April) from Champawat, to meet me and to tell all the people in the district that a sahib was coming from Naini Tal to try to shoot the man-eater. That shortly after the arrival of the *patwari* a woman of the village had been killed by the man-eater, and that in obedience to orders received from the Deputy Commissioner, Almora, the kill had not been disturbed. And finally that in anticipation of my arrival a party of men had been sent that morning to look for the kill

and, if there was anything left of it, to put up a machan for me. While the headman was giving me this information the party, numbering some thirty men, returned. These men told me that they had searched the ground where the tiger had eaten its kill and that all they had been able to find were the woman's teeth. Even her clothes, they said, were missing. When I asked where the kill had taken place, a lad of about seventeen who was with the party of men said that if I would accompany him to the other side of the village he would point out to me where his mother had been killed by the man-eater. With the lad leading and the throng of men, women, and children following me, we went through the village to a narrow saddle some fifty yards long connecting two hills. This saddle was the apex of two great valleys. The one on the left, or western side, swept down towards the Ladhya river; the one on the right fell steeply away and down ten or fifteen miles to the Kali river. Halting on the saddle the lad turned and faced the valley on the right. The left-hand or northern, side of this valley was under short grass with an odd bush scattered here and there, and the right-hand side was under dense scrub and tree jungle. Pointing to a bush on the grassy side eight hundred to a thousand yards away and a thousand to fifteen hundred feet below us, the lad said his mother had been killed near it while cutting grass in company with several other women. Then pointing to an oak tree in the ravine, the branches of which had been broken by langurs, he said it was under that tree that they had found the remains of his mother. Of the tiger, he said, neither he nor any of the party of men with him had seen or heard anything, but that when they were on their way down the hill they had heard first a ghooral, and then a little later, a *langur* calling.

A *ghooral* and a *langur* calling. Ghooral do occasionally call on seeing human beings, but not langurs. Both will call on seeing a tiger, however. Was it possible that the tiger had lingered near the scene of its kill and on being disturbed by the party of men had moved off and been seen, first by the ghooral, and then by the langur? While I was speculating on this point, and making a mental map of the whole country that stretched before me, the patwari, who had been having his food when I arrived, joined me. Questioned about the two young buffaloes for which I had asked Baynes, the *patwari* said he had started out with them from Champawat and that he had left them at a village ten miles from Talla Kote, where a boy had been

killed by the man-eater on 4 April within sight of the village. As there was no one on the spot to deal with the man-eater, the body had been recovered, and after a report of the occurrence had been sent to Champawat, from where it had been telegraphed to Tanakpur for my information, he had given orders for the body of the boy to be cremated.

My men had not yet arrived from the hamlet where we spent the night, so, after instructing the headman to have my tent pitched on the open ground near the stream, I decided to go down and have a look at the ground where the tiger had eaten his kill, with the object of finding out if the man-eater was male or female, and if the latter, whether she had cubs. This part of Kumaon was, as I have already said, unknown to me, and when I asked the headman if he could tell me the easiest way to get down into the valley the lad, who had pointed out to me where his mother had been killed and eaten, stepped forward and said very eagerly, 'I will come with you, Sahib, and show you the way.'

The courage of people living in an area in which there is danger from a man-eater, and the trust they are willing to place in absolute strangers, has always been a marvel to me. The lad, whose name I learnt was Dungar Singh, was yet another example of that courage and trust. For years Dungar Singh had lived in fear of the man-eater and only an hour previously he had seen the pitiful remains of his mother. And yet, alone and unarmed, he was willing to accompany an absolute stranger into an area in which he had every reason to believe—from the alarm call of a *ghooral* and a langur—that the killer of his mother was lurking. True, he had only recently visited that area, but on that occasion he had been accompanied by thirty of his friends, and in numbers there was safety.

There was no way down the steep hillside from the saddle, so Dungar Singh led me back through the village to where there was a goat track. As we went down through scattered bushes I told him that my hearing was defective, that if he wanted to draw my attention to any particular thing to stop and point to it, and that if he wanted to communicate with me to come close and whisper into my right ear. We had gone about four hundred yards when Dungar Singh stopped and looked back. Turning round and looking in

the same direction, I saw the *patwari* followed by a man carrying a shotgun hurrying down the hill after us. Thinking they had important information for me, I awaited their arrival and was disappointed to find that all the *patwari* wanted was to accompany me with his gun-bearer. This, very reluctantly, I permitted him to do for neither he nor his gun-bearer— both of whom were wearing heavy boots— looked like men who could move in a jungle without making considerable noise.

We had gone another four hundred yards through dense scrub jungle, when we came out on a clearing a few yards square. Here, where the goat track divided, one arm going towards a deep ravine on the left while the other followed the contour of the hill to the right, Dungar Singh stopped, and pointing in the direction of the ravine whispered that it was down there that the tiger had eaten his mother. As I did not wish the ground on which I wanted to look for pug-marks to be disturbed by booted men, I told Dungar Singh to stay on the open ground with the two men, while I went down alone into the ravine. As I stopped talking Dungar Singh whipped round and looked up the hill. When I looked in the same direction I saw a crowd of men standing on the saddle of the hill where I had stood a little while before. With a hand stretched out towards us to ensure silence, and the other cupped to his ear, Dungar Singh was intently listening, occasionally nodding his head. Then with a final nod he turned to me and whispered, 'My brother says to tell you that in the wyran field below you, there is something red lying in the sun.'

A wyran field is one that has gone out of cultivation, and below us on such a field there was something red lying in the sun. Maybe the red object was only a bit of dry bracken, or a *kakar* or young sambhar, but it might be a tiger. Anyway, I was not going to risk spoiling what might turn out to be a heaven-sent chance. So, handing my rifle to Dungar Singh, I took the *patwari* and his man, each by an arm, and led them to a medlar tree growing near by. Unloading the *patwari*'s gun and laying it under a bush, I told the two men to climb the tree and on pain of death to remain quietly in it until I ordered them to come down. I do not think any two men ever climbed into a tree more gladly and from the way they clung to the branches after they had climbed as high as it was safe to go, it was evident that their views on man-

eater hunting had undergone a drastic change since they followed me from the village.

The goat track to the right led on to a terraced field which had long been out of cultivation, and on which there was a luxuriant growth of oat grass. This field, about a hundred yards long, was ten feet wide at my end and thirty feet wide at the other, where it terminated on a ridge. For fifty yards the field was straight and then it curved to the left. As Dungar Singh saw me looking at it, he said that from the farther end we would be able to see down on to the wyran field on which his brother had seen the red object. Bending down and keeping to the inner edge of the field we crept along until we came to the far end. Here we lay down, and, crawling on hands and knees to the edge of the field, parted the grass and looked down.

Below us was a small valley with, on the far side, a steep grassy slope fringed on the side farthest from us by a dense growth of oak saplings. Beyond the saplings was the deep ravine in which the man-eater had eaten Dungar Singh's mother. The grassy slope was about thirty yards wide and below it was a rock cliff which, judging from the trees growing at the foot, was from eighty to a hundred feet high. On the near side of the slope was a terraced field, a hundred yards long and some ten yards wide. The field, which was in a straight line with us, had a small patch of short emerald-green grass at our end. On the remainder was a dense growth of an aromatic type of weed which grows to a height of four or five feet and has leaves like chrysanthemums, the undersides of which are white. Lying in brilliant sunlight on the patch of grass, and about ten feet apart, were two tigers.

The nearer tiger had its back to us with its head towards the hill, and the farther one had its stomach to us with its tail towards the hill. Both were fast asleep. The nearer offered the better shot, but I was afraid that on hearing the smack of the bullet the farther one would go straight down the hill into dense cover, in the direction in which its head was pointing. Whereas if I fired at the farther one first, the smack of the bullet— not to be confused with the crack of the rifle— would either drive the nearer one up the hill where there was less cover or else drive it towards me. So I decided to take the farther one first. The distance was approximately one hundred

and twenty yards, and the angle of fire was not so steep that any allowance had to be made for the lift of the bullet, a point which has to be kept in mind when shooting downhill on the Himalayas. Resting the back of my hand on the edge of the field, to form a cushion, and holding the rifle steady, I took careful aim at where I thought the animal's heart would be and gently pressed the trigger. The tiger never moved a muscle, but the other one was up like a flash and in one bound landed on a five-foot-high bank of earth that divided the field from a rainwater channel. Here the second tiger stood, broadside on to me, looking back over its right shoulder at its companion. At my shot it reared up and fell over backwards into the rainwater channel, and out of sight.

After my second shot I saw a movement in the aromatic weeds which started close to where the dead tiger was lying. A big animal was going at full gallop straight along the field. Having started from so close to where the two tigers had been lying, this third animal could only be another tiger. I could not see the animal, but I could follow its movements by the parting of the weeds, the leaves of which were white on the underside. Flicking up the two-hundred-yard leaf-sight I waited for the animal to break cover. Presently out on to the grassy slope dashed a tiger. I now noticed that the slope the tiger was on curved to the right, in the same way as the field I was lying on curved to the left. As the tiger was keeping to the contour of the hill this curve in the slope enabled me to get a near-broadside shot at it.

I have seen animals fall over at a shot, and I have seen them crumple up, but I have never seen an animal fall as convincingly dead as that tiger fell at my shot. For a few moments it lay motionless and then it started to slide down, feet foremost, gaining momentum as it went. Directly below it, and within a few feet of the brink of the rock cliff, was an oak sapling eight to ten inches thick. The tiger struck this sapling with its stomach and came to rest with its head and forelegs hanging down on one side and its tail and hindlegs hanging down on the other. With rifle to shoulder and finger on trigger I waited, but there was not so much as a quiver in the tiger. Getting to my feet I beckoned to the patwari, who from his seat on the medlar tree had obtained a grandstand view of the whole proceedings. Dungar Singh, who had lain near me breathing in short gasps, was now dancing with



excitement and from the way he was glancing at the tigers and then up at the crowd of people on the saddle, I knew he was thinking of the tale he would have to tell that night and for many moons thereafter.

When I saw the two tigers lying asleep I concluded that the man-eater had found a mate, but later, when my third shot flushed a third tiger, I knew I was dealing with a tigress and her two cubs. Which of the three was the mother and which the cubs it was not possible to say, for all three looked about the same size when I had viewed them over the sights of my rifle. That one of the three was the man-eater of Talla Des there could be no question, for tigers are scarce in the hills, and these three tigers had been shot close to where a human being had recently been killed and eaten. The cubs had died for the sins of their mother. They had undoubtedly eaten the human flesh their mother had provided for them from the time they were weaned; this, however, did not mean that when they left the protection of their mother they would have become man-eaters themselves. For in spite of all that has been said since *Man-eaters of Kumaon* was published I still maintain that the cubs of man-eating tigers— in that part of India about which I am writing— do not become man-eaters simply because they have eaten human flesh when young.

Sitting on the edge of the field with my feet dangling down and the rifle resting on my knees, I handed cigarettes to my companions and told them I would go and have a look at the tiger that had fallen into the rainwater channel, after we had finished our smoke. That I would find the tiger dead I had no doubt whatsoever; even so, nothing would be lost by waiting a few minutes, if for no other reason than to give myself a little time to rejoice over the marvellous luck I had met with. Within an hour of my arrival at Talla Des I had, quite by accident, got in touch with a man-eater that had terrorized an area of many hundreds of square miles for eight years, and in a matter of a few seconds had shot dead the man-eater and her two cubs. To the intense pleasure that all sportsmen feel at having held a rifle steady when every drop of blood in one's body is pounding with excitement, was added the pleasure and relief of knowing that there would be no necessity to follow up a wounded animal, a contingency that has to be faced when hunting tigers on foot.

My men would not ascribe my good fortune to luck. To avoid the possibility of failure they had consulted the old priest at the temple in Naini Tal and he had selected the propitious day for us to start on our journey to Talla Des, and evil omens when we started had been absent. My success would not be ascribed to good luck, therefore; nor, if I had failed to shoot the tigers, would my failure have been ascribed to bad luck, for no matter how well aimed a bullet might be it could do no harm to an animal whose time to die had not come. The superstitions of those whom I have been associated with on *shikar* have always been of interest to me. Being myself unwilling to begin a journey on a Friday, I am not inclined to laugh at a hillman's rooted aversion to begin a journey to the north on Tuesday or Wednesday, to the south on Thursday, to the east on Monday or Saturday, or to the west on Sunday or Friday. To permit those who accompany one on a dangerous mission to select the day for the start of the journey is a small matter, but it makes all the difference between having cheerful and contented companions and companions who are oppressed by a feeling of impending disaster.

The four of us sitting on the edge of the field had nearly finished our cigarettes, when I noticed that the tiger that was resting against the oak sapling was beginning to move. The blood from the body had evidently drained into the forward end of the animal, making that end heavier than the tail end, and it was now slowly slipping down head foremost. Once it was clear of the sapling the tiger glissaded down the grassy slope, and over the brink of the rock cliff. As it fell through space I threw up the rifle and fired. I fired that shot on the spur of the moment to give expression to my joy at the success of my mission to Talla Des, and also, I am ashamed to admit, to demonstrate that there was nothing— not even a tiger falling through space — that I could not hit on a day like this. A moment after the tiger disappeared among the tree tops, there was a rending of branches, followed by a dull and heavy thud. Whether or not I had hit the falling tiger did not matter, but what did matter was that the men of the village would have farther to carry it now than if it had remained on the slope.

My cigarette finished, I told my companions to sit still while I went down to look at the tiger in the rainwater channel. The hill was very steep and I

had climbed down some fifty feet when Dungar Singh called out in a very agitated voice. 'Look, Sahib, look. There goes the tiger.' With my thoughts on the tiger below me, I sat down and raised my rifle to meet the charge I thought was coming. On seeing my preparations, the lad called out, 'Not here, but there, Sahib, there.' Relieved of the necessity of guarding my front I turned my head and looked at Dungar Singh and saw he was pointing across the main valley to the lower slopes of the hill on which his mother had been killed. At first I could see nothing, and then I caught sight of a tiger going diagonally up towards a ridge that ran out from the main hill. The tiger was very lame and could only take three or four steps at a time, and on its right shoulder was a big patch of blood. The patch of blood showed it was the tiger that had crashed through the trees, for the tiger that had fallen into the rainwater channel had been shot in the left shoulder.



Growing on the hill close to where I was sitting was a slender pine sapling. Putting up the three-hundred-yard leaf-sight I got a firm grip of the sapling with my left hand and resting the rifle on my wrist took a careful and an unhurried shot. The distance was close on four hundred yards and the tiger was on a slightly higher elevation than I was, so, taking a very full sight, I waited until it again came to a stand and then gently pressed the trigger. The bullet appeared to take an incredibly long time to cover the distance, but at last I saw a little puff of dust and at the same moment the tiger lurched forward, and then carried on with its slow walk. I had taken a little too full a sight, and the bullet had gone a shade too high. I now had the range to a nicety and all that I needed to kill the tiger was one more cartridge; the cartridge I had foolishly flung away when the tiger was falling through the air. With an empty rifle in my hands, I watched the tiger slowly and painfully climb to the ridge, hesitate for a few moments, and then disappear from view.

Sportsmen who have never shot in the Himalayas will question my wisdom in having armed myself with a light .275 rifle, and only carrying five rounds of ammunition. My reasons for having done so were:

(a) The rifle was one I had used for over twenty years, and with which I was familiar.

(b) It was light to carry, accurate, and sighted up to three hundred yards.

(c) I had been told by Colonel Barber to avoid using a heavy rifle, and not to fire more shots than were necessary with a light one.

With regard to ammunition, I had not set out that morning to shoot tigers but to find the village where the last human kill had taken place and, if I had the time, to tie out a young buffalo as bait. As it turned out, both the light rifle and the five rounds would have served my purpose if I had not thrown away that vital round.

My men arrived at the village in time to join the crowd on the saddle, and to witness the whole proceedings. They knew that the five rounds in the magazine of the rifle were all the ammunition I had with me, and when after my fifth shot they saw the wounded tiger disappear over the ridge, Madho Singh came tearing down the hill with a fresh supply of ammunition.

The tiger on the patch of green grass, and the tiger in the rainwater channel— which I found lying dead where it had fallen— were both nearly full-grown, and the one that had got away wounded was quite evidently their mother, the man-eater of Talla Des. Leaving Madho Singh and Dungar Singh to make arrangements for the cubs to be carried up to the village, I set out alone to try to get in touch with the wounded tigress. From the bed of bracken on to which she had fallen after crashing through the trees, I followed a light blood-trail to where she had been standing when I fired my last shot. Here I found a few cut hairs clipped from her back by my bullet, and a little extra blood which had flowed from her wound when she lurched forward on hearing my bullet strike the ground above her. From this spot to the ridge there was only an occasional drop of blood, and on the short stiff grass beyond the ridge I lost the trail. Close by was a dense patch of scrub,

a hundred yards wide, extending up the side of a steep hill for three hundred yards, and I suspected that the tigress had taken shelter in this scrub. But as night was now closing in and there was not sufficient light for accurate shooting, I decided to return to the village and leave the searching of the scrub until the following day.

## 5

The next morning was spent in skinning the cubs and in pegging out their skins with the six-inch nails I had brought with me from Naini Tal. While I was performing this task at least a hundred vultures alighted on the trees fringing the open ground on which my tent was pitched. It was these that brought to light the missing clothes of the man-eater's victim, for the cubs had torn the blood-soaked garments into strips and swallowed them.

The men of the village sat round me while I was skinning the cubs and I told them I wanted them to assist my Garhwalis in beating out the patch of scrub in which I thought the wounded tigress had taken shelter. This they were very willing to do. At about midday we set off, the men going through the village and along the saddle to the top of the hill above the cover, while I went down the goat track into the valley and up to the ridge over which I had followed the tigress the previous evening. At the lower edge of the scrub there was an enormous boulder — from which I was visible to the men at the top of the hill— I waved my hat as a signal for them to start the beat. To avoid the risk of anyone getting mauled, I had instructed the men to stay on the top of the hill and, after clapping their hands and shouting, to roll rocks down the hillside into the scrub I have spoken of. One *kakar* and a few *kalege* pheasants came out of the bushes, but nothing else. When the rocks had searched out every foot of the ground, I again waved my hat as a signal for the men to stop the beat and return to the village.

When the men had gone I searched the cover, but without any hope of finding the tigress. As I watched her going up the hill the previous evening I could see that she was suffering from a very painful wound, and when I examined the blood where she had lurched forward, I knew the wound was

a surface one and not internal. Why then had the tigress fallen to my bullet as if poleaxed, and why had she hung suspended from the oak sapling for a matter of ten to fifteen minutes without showing any signs of life? To these questions I could not at the time nor can I now find any reasonable answer. Later I found my soft-nose, nickel-encased bullet firmly fixed in the ball-and-socket joint of the right shoulder. When the flight of a high-velocity bullet is arrested by impact with a bone the resulting shock to an animal is very considerable. Even so, a tiger is a heavy animal with a tremendous amount of vitality, and why a light .275 bullet should knock such an animal flat and render it unconscious for ten or fifteen minutes is to me inexplicable.

Returning to the ridge, I stood and surveyed the country. The ridge appeared to be many miles long and divided two valleys. The valley to the left at the upper end of which was the patch of scrub was open grass country, while the valley to the right at the upper end of which the tigers had eaten the woman had dense tree and scrub jungle on the right-hand side, and a steep shaly slope edging in a rock cliff on the left.



Sitting down on a rock on the ridge to have a quiet smoke, I reviewed the events of the previous evening, and came to the following conclusions:

(a) From the time the tigress fell to my shot to the time she crashed through the trees, she had been unconscious.

(b) Her fall, cushioned by the trees and the bed of bracken, had restored consciousness but had left her dazed.

(c) In this dazed condition she had just followed her nose and on coming up against the hill she had climbed it without knowing where she was going.

The question that now faced me was: How far and in what direction had the tigress gone? Walking downhill with an injured leg is far more painful than walking uphill and as soon as the tigress recovered from her dazed condition she would stop going downhill and would make for cover in which to nurse her injury. To get to cover she would have to cross the ridge, so the obvious thing was to try to find out if she had done so. The task of finding if a soft-footed animal had crossed a ridge many miles long would have been a hopeless one if the ridge had not had a knife-edge. Running along the top was a game track, with an ideal surface for recording the passages of all the animals that used it. On the left of the track was a grassy slope and on the right a steep shale scree ending in a sheer drop into the ravine below.

Finishing my smoke I set off along the game track on which I found the tracks of ghooral, sarao, sambhar, langur, porcupine, and the pug-marks of a male leopard. The farther I went the more despondent I grew, for I knew that if I did not find the tigress's pug-marks on this track there was little hope of my ever seeing her again. I had gone about a mile along the ridge, disturbing two *ghooral* who bounded away down the grassy slope to the left, when I found the pug-marks of the tigress, and a spot of dry blood. Quite evidently, after disappearing from my view over the ridge the previous evening, the tigress had gone straight down the grassy slope until she recovered from her dazed condition and then had kept to the contour of the hill, which brought her to the game track. For half a mile I followed her pug-marks to where the shale scree narrowed to about fifteen yards. Here the tigress attempted to go down the scree, evidently with the intention of gaining the shelter of the jungle on the far side of the ravine. Whether her injured leg failed her or whether dizziness overcame her, I do not know; anyway, after falling forward and sliding head-foremost for a few yards she turned round and with legs widespread clawed the ground in a desperate but vain effort to avoid going over the sheer drop into the ravine below. I am as sure-footed as a goat, but that scree was far too difficult for me to attempt to negotiate, so I carried on along the track for a few hundred yards until I came to a rift in the hill. Down this rift I climbed into the ravine.



As I walked up the thirty-yard-wide ravine I noted that the rock cliff below the shale scree was from sixty to eighty feet high. No animal, I was



convinced, could fall that distance on to rocks without being killed. On approaching the spot where the tigress had fallen I was overjoyed to see the white underside of a big animal. My joy, however, was short lived, for I found the animal was a sarao and not the tigress. The sarao had evidently been lying asleep on a narrow ledge near the top of the cliff and, on being awakened by hearing, and possibly scenting, the tigress above him, had lost his nerve and jumped down, breaking his neck on the rocks at the foot of the cliff. Close to where the sarao had fallen there was a small patch of loose sand. On this the tigress had landed without doing herself any harm beyond tearing open the wound in her shoulder. Ignoring the dead sarao, within a yard of which she passed, the tigress crossed the ravine, leaving a well-defined blood trail. The bank on the right-hand side of the ravine was only a few feet high, and several times the tigress tried but failed to climb it. I knew now that I would find her in the first bit of cover she could reach. But my luck was out. For some time heavy clouds had been massing overhead, and before I found where the tigress had left the ravine a deluge of rain came on, washing out the blood trail. The evening was now well advanced and as I had a long and a difficult way to go, I turned and made for camp.

Luck plays an important part in all sport, and the tigress had — so far— had her full share of it. First, instead of lying out in the open with her cubs where I would have been able to recognize her for what she was, she was lying out of sight in thick cover. Then, the flight of my bullet had been arrested by striking the one bone that was capable of preventing it from inflicting a fatal wound. Later the tigress had twice fallen down a rock cliff, where she would undoubtedly have been killed had her fall in the one case not been cushioned by branches and a bed of bracken and in the other by a soft patch of sand. And finally, when I was only a hundred yards from where she was lying up, the rain came down and washed out the blood trail. However, I too had had a measure of luck, for my fear that the tigress would wander away down the greasy slope where I would lose touch with her had not been realized, and, further, I knew now where to look for her.

Next morning I returned to the ravine, accompanied by my six Garhwalis. Throughout Kumaon the flesh of sarao is considered a great delicacy, and as the young animal that had broken its neck was in prime condition, it would provide a very welcome meat ration for my men. Leaving the men to skin the sarao, I went to the spot from where I had turned back the previous evening. Here I found that two deep and narrow ravines ran up the face of the hill on the right. As it was possible that the tigress had gone up one of these, I tried the nearer one first only to find, after I had gone up it for a few hundred yards, that the sides were too steep for any tiger to climb, and that it ended in what in the monsoon rains must have been a thirty-foot-high waterfall. Returning to my starting point I called out to the men, who were about fifty yards away up the main ravine, to light a fire and boil a kettle of water for my tea. I then turned to examine the second ravine and as I did so I noticed a well-used game track coming down the hill on the left-hand side. On the game track I found the pug-marks of the tigress, partly obliterated by the rain of the previous evening. Close to where I was standing was a big rock. On approaching this rock I saw that there was a little depression on the far side. The dead leaves in the depression had been flattened down, and on them were big clots of blood. After her fall into the ravine— which may have been forty hours earlier— the tigress had come to this spot and had only moved off on hearing me call to the men to boil the kettle for tea.

Owing to differences in temperament it is not possible to predict what a wounded tiger will do when approached by a human being on foot, nor is it possible to fix a period during which a wounded tiger can be considered as being dangerous— that is liable to charge when disturbed. I have seen a tiger with an inch-long cut in a hind pad, received while running away, charge full out from a distance of a hundred yards five minutes after receiving the wound; and I have seen a tiger that had been nursing a very painful jaw wound for many hours allow an approach to within a few feet without making any attempt to attack. Where a wounded man-eating tiger is concerned the situation is a little complicated, for, apart from not knowing whether the wounded animal will attack on being approached, there is the possibility— when the wound is not an internal one— of its attacking to provide itself with food. Tigers, except when wounded or when man-eaters, are on the whole very good-tempered. Were this not so it would not be

possible for thousands of people to work as they do in tiger-infested jungles, nor would it have been possible for people like me to have wandered for years through the jungles on foot without coming to any harm. Occasionally a tiger will object to too close an approach to its cubs or to a kill that it is guarding. The objection invariably takes the form of growling, and if this does not prove effective it is followed by short rushes accompanied by terrifying roars. If these warnings are disregarded, the blame for any injury inflicted rests entirely with the intruder. The following experience with which I met some years ago is a good example of my assertion that tigers are good-tempered. My sister Maggie and I were fishing one evening on the Boar river three miles from our home at Kaladhungi. I had caught two small *mahseer* and was sitting on a rock smoking when Geoff Hopkins, who later became Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh, turned up on his elephant. He was expecting friends, and being short of meat he had gone out with a .240 rook-rifle to try to shoot a *kakar* or a peafowl. I had caught all the fish we needed, so we fell in with Geoff's suggestion that we should accompany him and help him to find the game he was looking for. Mounting the elephant we crossed the river and I directed the *mahout* to a part of the jungle where *kakar* and peafowl were to be found. We were going through short grass and plum jungle when I caught sight of a dead *cheetal* lying under a tree. Stopping the elephant I slipped to the ground and went to see what had killed the cheetal. She was an old hind that had been dead for twenty-four hours, and as I could find no marks of injury on her I concluded that she had died of snakebite. As I turned to rejoin the elephant I saw a drop of fresh blood on a leaf. The shape of the drop of blood showed that the animal from which it had come had been moving away from the dead cheetal. Looking a little farther in the direction in which the splash from the blood indicated the animal had gone, I saw another spot of blood. Puzzled by this fresh blood-trail I set off to see where it led to, and signalled to the elephant to follow me. After going over short grass for sixty or seventy yards the trail led towards a line of thick bushes some five feet high. Going up to the bushes where the trail ended I stretched out both arms— I had left my rod on the elephant— and parted the bushes wide, and there under my outstretched hands was a *cheetal* stag with horns in velvet, and lying facing me and eating the stag was a tiger. As I parted the bushes the tiger looked up and the expression on its face said,

as clearly as any words, 'Well, I'll be damned!' Which was exactly what I was saying to myself. Fortunately I was so surprised that I remained perfectly still— possibly because my heart had stopped beating— and after looking straight into my face for a moment the tiger, who was close enough to have stretched out a paw and stroked my head, rose, turned, and sprang into the bushes behind him all in one smooth graceful movement. The tiger had killed the stag among the plum bushes shortly before our arrival, and in taking it to cover he went past the dead hind, leaving the blood trail that I followed. The three on the elephant did not see the tiger until he was in the air, when the *mahout* exclaimed with horror, 'Khabardar, Sahib. Sher hai.' He was telling me that it was a tiger and to be careful.

Rejoining my men I drank a cup of tea while they cut up the sarao into convenient bits to carry, and returned with them to the depression in which I had found the clots of blood. All six men had been out on shikar with me on many occasions, and on seeing the quantity of blood they were of the opinion that the tigress had a body wound which would prove fatal in a matter of hours. On this point we were not in agreement, for I knew the wound was a superficial one from which the tigress, given time, would recover, and that the longer she lived the more difficult it would be to get in touch with her.

If you can imagine a deep and narrow ravine running up the face of a steep hill with the ground on the right sloping towards the ravine and well wooded but free of undergrowth, and the ground on the left-hand side of the ravine sloping upwards and covered with dense patches of *ringal* (stunted bamboo), bracken, and brushwood of all kinds, you will have some idea of the country my men and I worked over for the rest of that day.

My plan was for the men to go up on the right-hand side of the ravine, to keep me in sight by climbing into the highest trees they could find, and, if they wished to attract my attention, to whistle— hillmen, like some boys, are very good at whistling through their teeth. They would be in no danger from the tigress, for there was no cover on their side, and all of them were expert tree-climbers. The tracks of the tigress after she left the depression

near the big rock showed that she had gone up the hill on the left-hand side of the ravine. Up this hill I now started to follow her.

I have emphasized elsewhere that jungle lore is not a science that can be learnt from textbooks, but that it can be absorbed a little at a time, and that the absorption process can go on indefinitely. The same applies to tracking. Tracking, because of its infinite variations, is one of the most interesting forms of sport I know and it can, at times, be also the most exciting. There are two generally accepted methods of tracking. One, following a trail on which there is blood, and the other, following a trail on which there is no blood. In addition to these two methods I have also at times been able to find a wounded animal by following blowflies, or by following meat-eating birds. Of the two generally accepted methods, following a blood-trail is the more sure way of finding a wounded animal. But as wounds do not always bleed, wounded animals have at times to be tracked by their foot-prints or by the disturbance to vegetation caused by their passage. Tracking can be easy or difficult according to the nature of the ground, and also according to whether the animal being tracked has hard hooves or soft pads. When the tigress left the depression—on hearing me calling to my men—her wound had stopped bleeding and the slight discharge that was coming from the wound owing to its having turned septic was not sufficient to enable me to follow her, so I had to resort to tracking her by her foot-prints and by disturbed vegetation. This, on the ground I was on, would not be difficult, but it would be slow, and time was on the side of the tigress. For the longer the trail the better the chances would be of her recovering from her wound and the less chance there would be of my finding her, for the strain of the past few days was now beginning to tell on me.

For the first hundred yards the trail led through knee-high bracken. Here tracking was easy, for the tigress had kept to a more or less straight line. Beyond the bracken was a dense thicket of ringal. I felt sure the tigress would be lying up in this thicket, but unless she charged there was little hope of my getting a shot at her, for it was not possible to move silently through the matted ringals. When I was halfway through the thicket akakar started barking. The tigress was on the move, but instead of going straight up the hill she had gone out on the left, apparently on to open ground, for

the *kakar* was standing still and barking. Retracing my steps I worked round to the left but found no open ground in that direction, nor did I appear to be getting any nearer the barking deer. The *kakar*, soon after, stopped barking and a number of *kalege* pheasants started chattering. The tigress was still on the move, but, turn my head as I would, I could not locate the sound.

Pin-pointing, that is fixing the exact direction and distance of all sounds heard, is a jungle accomplishment which I have reduced to a fine art and of which I am very proud. Now, for the first time, I realized with a shock that my accident had deprived me of this accomplishment and that no longer would I be able to depend on my ears for safety and for the pleasure of listening intimately to the jungle folk whose language it had taken me years to learn. Had my remaining ear been sound it would not have mattered so much, but unfortunately the drum of that ear also had been injured by a gun 'accident' many years previously. Well, there was nothing that could be done about it now, and handicapped though I was I was not going to admit at this stage of the proceedings that any tiger, man-eater or other, had any advantage over me when we were competing for each other's lives under conditions that favoured neither side.

Returning to the bracken, I started to try to find the tigress, depending on my eyes only. The jungle appeared to be well stocked with game, and I repeatedly heard sambhar, *kakar*, and *langur* giving their alarm calls, and more than once I heard pheasants, jays, and white-capped laughing thrush mobbing the tigress. Paying no attention to these sounds, which ordinarily I would have listened for eagerly, I tracked the tigress foot by foot as, resting frequently, she made her way up the hill, at times in a straight line and at times zigzagging from cover to cover. Near the top of the hill was a stretch of short stiff grass about a hundred yards wide. Beyond this open ground were two patches of dense brushwood divided by a narrow lane which ran up to the top of the hill. On the short stiff grass I lost the tracks. The tigress knew she was being closely followed and would therefore expose herself as little as possible. The patch of brushwood to my right front was thirty yards nearer than the patch to the left, so I decided to try it first. When I was within a yard or two of the cover I heard a dry stick snap under the weight of some heavy animal. I was positive on this occasion that the sound had

come from the left, so I turned and went to the patch of brushwood from which the sound appeared to have come. This was the second mistake I made that day—the first was calling to my men to boil the kettle for tea—for my men told me later that I crossed the open stretch of ground on the heels of the tigress, and that when I turned and walked away to the left she was lying on an open bit of ground a few yards inside the bushes, evidently waiting for me.

Finding no trace of the tigress in the brushwood on the left I came back to the open ground, and, on hearing my men whistling, looked in the direction in which I expected them to be. They had climbed to the top of a tree a few hundred yards to my right, and when I lifted my hand to indicate that I had seen them, they waved me up, up, up, and then down, down, down. They were letting me know that the tigress had climbed to the top of the hill, and that she had gone down on the far side. Making what speed I could I went up the narrow lane and on reaching the top found an open hillside. On this the grass had been burnt recently, and in the ashes, which were still damp from the rain of the previous evening, I found the pug-marks of the tigress. The hill sloped gently down to a stream, the one that I had crossed several miles higher up on the day of my arrival at Talla Kote. After lying down and quenching her thirst the tigress had crossed the stream and gone up into the thick jungle beyond. It was now getting late, so I retraced my steps to the top of the hill and beckoned to my men to join me.

From the big rock where I took up the tracks of the tigress to the stream where I left them was only some four miles, and it had taken me seven hours to cover the distance. Though it had ended in failure the day had been an interesting and exciting one. Not only for me who, while doing the tracking, had to avoid being ambushed by a wounded man-eating tiger, but also for my Garhwalis who by climbing trees had kept both the tigress and myself in view most of the time. And it had been a long day also, for we had started at daylight, and it was 8 p.m. when we got back to camp.

The following morning while my men were having their food I attended to the skins, re-pegging them on fresh ground and rubbing wood ashes and powdered alum on the damp parts. Tiger skins need a lot of care, for if every particle of fat is not removed and the lips, ears, and pads properly treated, the hair slips, ruining the skin. A little before midday I was ready to start, and accompanied by four of my men— I left the other two men in camp to attend to the sarao's skin— I set out for the place where I had stopped tracking the tigress the previous evening.

The Valley through which the stream flowed was wide and comparatively flat, and ran from west to east. On the left-hand side of the valley was the hill on the far side of which I had followed the tigress the previous day, and on the right-hand side was the hill along which ran the road to Tanakpur. Before the advent of the man-eater the valley between these two hills had been extensively grazed over by the cattle of Talla Kote, and in consequence the ground was criss-crossed by a maze of cattle paths, and cut up with narrow eroded water-channels. Dotted about the valley were open glades of varying sizes surrounded by dense scrub and tree jungle. Good ground on which to hunt sambhar, kakar, and bear, all of whose tracks were to be seen on the cattle paths, but not the ground one would select on which to hunt a man-eating tiger. The hill on the left commanded an extensive view of the valley so I spaced my men in trees along the crest at intervals of two hundred yards to keep a look-out and to be on hand in case they were needed. I then went down to the spot where I had left the tracks of the tigress the previous evening.

I had wounded the tigress on 7 April, and it was now the 10th. As a general rule a tiger is not considered to be dangerous— that is, liable to charge at sight— twenty-four hours after being wounded. A lot depends on the nature of the wound, however, and on the temper of the wounded individuals. Twenty-four hours after receiving a light flesh wound a tiger usually moves away on being approached, whereas a tiger with a painful body-wound might continue to be dangerous for several days. I did not know the nature of the wound the tigress was suffering from, and as she had made no attempt to attack me the previous day I believed I could now ignore the fact that she was wounded and look upon her only as a man-



eater, and a very hungry man-eater at that, for she had eaten nothing since killing the woman whom she had shared with the cubs.

Where the tigress had crossed the stream there was a channel, three feet wide and two feet deep, washed out by rainwater. Up this channel, which was bordered by dense brushwood, the tigress had gone. Following her tracks I came to a cattle path. Here she had left the channel and gone along the path to the right. Three hundred yards along was a tree with heavy foliage and under this tree the tigress had lain all night. Her wound had troubled her and she had tossed about, but on the leaves on which she had been lying there was neither blood nor any discharge from her wound. From this point on I followed her fresh tracks, taking every precaution not to walk into an ambush. By evening I had tracked her for several miles along cattle paths, water channels, and game tracks, without having set eyes on so much as the tip of her tail. At sunset I collected my men, and as we returned to camp they told me they had been able to follow the movements of the tigress through the jungle by the animals and birds that had called at her, but that they too had seen nothing of her.

When hunting unwounded man-eating tigers the greatest danger, when walking into the wind, is of an attack from behind, and to a lesser extent from either side. When the wind is from behind, the danger is from either side. In the same way, if the wind is blowing from the right the danger is from the left and from behind, and if blowing from the left the danger is from the right and from behind. In none of these cases is there any appreciable danger of an attack from in front, for in my experience all unwounded tigers, whether man-eaters or not, are disinclined to make a head-on attack. Under normal conditions man-eating tigers limit the range of their attack to the distance they can spring, and for this reason they are more difficult to cope with than wounded tigers, who invariably launch an attack from a little distance, maybe only ten or twenty yards, but possibly as much as a hundred yards. This means that whereas the former have to be dealt with in a matter of split seconds, the latter give one time to raise a rifle and align the sights. In either case it means rapid shooting and a fervent prayer that an ounce or two of lead will stop a few hundred pounds of muscle and bone.

In the case of the tigress I was hunting, I knew that her wound would not admit of her springing and that if I kept out of her reach I would be comparatively safe. The possibility that she had recovered from her wound in the four days that had elapsed since I had last seen her had, however, to be taken into account. When therefore I started out alone on the morning of 11 April to take up the tracks where I had left them the previous evening, I resolved to keep clear of any rock, bush, tree, or other object behind which the tigress might be lying up in wait for me.

She had been moving the previous evening in the direction of the Tanakpur road. I again found where she had spent the night, this time on a soft bed of dry grass, and from this point I followed her fresh tracks. Avoiding dense cover— possibly because she could not move through it silently— she was keeping to water channels and game tracks and it became apparent that she was not moving about aimlessly but was looking for something to kill and eat. Presently, in one of these water channels she found and killed a few-weeks-old kakar. She had come on the young deer as it was lying asleep in the sun on a bed of sand, and had eaten every scrap of it, rejecting nothing but the tiny hooves. I was now only a minute or two behind her, and knowing that the morsel would have done no more than whet her appetite, I redoubled my precautions. In places the channels and game tracks to which the tigress was keeping twisted and turned and ran through dense cover or past rocks. Had my condition been normal I would have followed on her footsteps and possibly been able to catch up with her, but unfortunately I was far from normal. The swelling on my head, face, and neck, had now increased to such proportions that I was no longer able to move my head up or down or from side to side, and my left eye was closed. However, I still had one good eye, fortunately my right one, and I could still hear a little.

During the whole of that day I followed the tigress without seeing her and without, I believe, her seeing me. Where she had gone along water channels, game tracks, or cattle paths that ran through dense cover I skirted round the cover and picked up her pug-marks on the far side. Not knowing the ground was a very great handicap, for not only did it necessitate walking more miles than I need have done, but it also prevented my

anticipating the movements of the tigress and ambushing her. When I finally gave up the chase for the day, the tigress was moving up the valley in the direction of the village.

Back in camp I realized that the ‘bad time’ I had foreseen and dreaded was approaching. Electric shocks were stabbing through the enormous abscess, and the hammer blows were increasing in intensity. Sleepless nights and a diet of tea had made a coward of me, and I could not face the prospect of sitting on my bed through another long night, racked with pain and waiting for something, I knew not what, to happen. I had come to Talla Des to try to rid the hill people of the terror that menaced them and to tide over my bad time, and all that I had accomplished so far was to make their condition worse. Deprived of the ability to secure her natural prey, the tigress, who in eight years had only killed a hundred and fifty people would now, unless she recovered from her wound, look to her easiest prey—human beings — to provide her with most of the food she needed. There was therefore an account to be settled between the tigress and myself, and that night was as suitable a time as any to settle it.

Calling for a cup of tea— made hill-fashion with milk— which served me as dinner, I drank it while standing in the moonlight. Then, calling my eight men together, I instructed them to wait for me in the village until the following evening, and if I did not return by then to pack up my things and start early the next morning for Naini Tal. Having done this I picked up my rifle from where I put it on my bed, and headed clown the valley. My men, all of whom had been with me for years, said not a word either to ask me where I was going or to try to dissuade me from going. They just stood silent in a group and watched me walk away. Maybe the glint I saw on their cheeks was only imagination, or maybe it was only the reflection of the moon. Anyway, when I looked back not a man had moved. They were just standing in a group as I had left them.

One of my most pleasant recollections— of the days when I was young—are the moonlight walks along forest roads that ten or a dozen of us used to take during the winter months, and the high teas we consumed on our return home. These walks tended to dispel all the fears that assail a human being in a forest at night, and, further, they made us familiar with the sounds to be heard in a forest by night. Later, years of experience added to my confidence and to my knowledge. When therefore I left my camp on the night of 11 April— in brilliant moonlight— to try conclusions with the Talla Des man-eating tigress, I did not set out with any feeling of inferiority on what might appear to have been a suicidal quest.

I have been interested in tigers from as far back as I can remember, and having spent most of my life in an area in which they were plentiful I have had ample opportunities of observing them. My ambition when I was very young was to see a tiger, just that, and no more. Later my ambition was to shoot a tiger, and this I accomplished on foot with an old army rifle which I bought for fifty rupees from a seafaring man, who I am inclined to think had stolen it and converted it into a sporting rifle. Later still, it was my ambition to photograph a tiger. In the course of time all three of these ambitions were fulfilled. It was while trying to photograph tigers that I learnt the little I know about them. Having been favoured by Government with the ‘freedom of the forests’, a favour which I very greatly appreciate and which I shared with only one other sportsman in India, I was able to move about without let or hindrance in those forests in which tigers were most plentiful. Watching tigers for days or weeks on end, and on one occasion for four and a half months, I was able to learn a little about their habits and in particular their method of approaching and of killing their victims. A tiger does not run down its prey; it either lies in wait or stalks it. In either case contact with its victim is made by a single spring, or by a rush of a few yards followed by a spring. If therefore an animal avoids passing within striking distance of a tiger, avoids being stalked, and reacts instantly to danger whether conveyed by sight, scent, or by hearing, it has a reasonable chance of living to an old age. Civilization has deprived human beings of the keen sense of scent and hearing enjoyed by animals, and when a human being is menaced by a man-eating tiger he has to depend for his safety almost entirely on sight. When restlessness and pain compelled me to

be on the move that night, I was handicapped to the extent that I only had one effective eye. But against this handicap was the knowledge that the tigress could do me no harm if I kept out of her reach, whereas I could kill her at a distance. My instructions therefore to my men to go back to Naini Tal if I failed to return by the following evening were not given because I thought I could not cope with the tigress, but since I feared there was a possibility of my becoming unconscious and unable to defend myself.

One of the advantages of making detailed mental maps of ground covered is that finding the way back to any given spot presents no difficulty. Picking up the pug-marks of my quarry where I had left them, I resumed my tracking, which was now only possible on game tracks and on cattle paths, to which the tigress was, fortunately, keeping. Sambhar and *kakar* had now come out to the open glades, some to feed and others for protection, and though I could not pin-point their alarm calls they let me know when the tigress was on the move and gave me a rough idea of the direction in which she was moving.

On a narrow, winding cattle path running through dense cover I left the pug-marks of the tigress and worked around through scattered brushwood to try to pick them up on the far side. The way round was longer than I had anticipated, and I eventually came out on an open stretch of ground with short grass and dotted about with big oak trees. Here I came to a halt in the shadow of a big tree. Presently, by a movement of this shadow, I realized that the tree above me was tenanted by a troop of langurs. I had covered a lot of ground during the eighteen hours I had been on my feet that day and here now was safe place for me to rest awhile, for the langurs above would give warning of danger. Sitting with my back against the tree and facing the cover round which I had skirted, I had been resting for half an hour when an old *langur* gave his alarm call; the tigress had come out into the open and the *langur* had caught sight of her. Presently I too, caught sight of the tigress just as she started to lie down.

She was a hundred yards to my right and ten yards from the cover, and she lay down broadside on to me with her head turned looking up at the calling langur.

I have had a lot of practice in night shooting, for during the winter months I assisted our tenants at Kaladhungi to protect their crops against marauding animals such as pig and deer. On a clear moonlit night I can usually count on hitting an animal up to a range of about a hundred yards. Like most people who have taught themselves to shoot, I keep both eyes open when shooting. This enables me to keep the target in view with one eye, while aligning the sights of the rifle with the other. At any other time I would have waited for the tigress to stand up and then fired at her, but unfortunately my left eye was now closed and a hundred yards was too far to risk a shot with only one eye. On the two previous nights the tigress had lain in the one spot and had possibly slept most of the night, and she might do the same now. If she lay right down on her side— she was now lying on her stomach with her head up— and went to sleep I could either go back to the cattle path on which I had left her pug-marks and follow her tracks to the edge of the cover and get to within ten yards of her, or I could creep up to her over the open ground until I got close enough to make sure of my shot. Anyway, for the present I could do nothing but sit perfectly still until the tigress made up her mind what she was going to do.

For a long time, possibly half an hour or a little longer, the tigress lay in one position, occasionally moving her head from side to side, while the old *langur* in a sleepy voice continued to give his alarm call. Finally she got to her feet and very slowly and very painfully started to walk away to my right. Directly in the line in which she was going there was an open ravine ten to fifteen feet deep and twenty to twenty-five yards wide, which I had crossed lower down when coming to the spot where I now was. When the tigress had increased the distance between us to a hundred and fifty yards, and the chances of her seeing me had decreased, I started to follow her. Slipping from tree to tree, and moving a little faster than she, I reduced her lead to fifty yards by the time she reached the edge of the ravine. She was now in range, but was standing in shadow, and her tail end was a very small mark to fire at. For a long and anxious minute she stood in the one position and then, having made up her mind to cross the ravine, very gently went over the edge.

As the tigress disappeared from view I bent down and ran forward on silent feet. Bending my head down and running was a very stupid mistake for me to have made, and I had only run a few yards when I was overcome by vertigo. Near me were two oak saplings, a few feet apart and with interlaced branches. Laying down my rifle I climbed up the saplings to a height of ten or twelve feet. Here I found a branch to sit on, another for my feet, and yet other small branches for me to rest against. Crossing my arms on the branches in front of me, I laid my head on them, and at that moment the abscess burst, not into my brain as I feared it would, but out through my nose and left ear.

‘No greater happiness can man know, than the sudden cessation of great pain,’ was said by someone who had suffered and suffered greatly and who knew the happiness of sudden relief. It was round about midnight when relief came to me, and the grey light was just beginning to show in the east when I raised my head from my crossed arms. Cramp in my legs resulting from my having sat on a thin branch for four hours had roused me, and for a little while I did not know where I was or what had happened to me. Realization was not long in coming. The great swelling on my head, face, and neck had gone and with it had gone the pain. I could now move my head as I liked, my left eye was open, and I could swallow without discomfort. I had lost an opportunity of shooting the tigress, but what did that matter now, for I was over my bad time and no matter where or how far the tigress went I would follow her, and sooner or later I would surely get another chance.

When I last saw the tigress she was heading in the direction of the village. Swinging down from the saplings, up which I had climbed with such difficulty, I retrieved my rifle and headed in the same direction. At the stream I stopped and washed and cleaned myself and my clothes as best I could. My men had not spent the night in the village as I had instructed them to, but had sat round a fire near my tent keeping a kettle of water on the boil. As, dripping with water, they saw me coming towards them they sprang up with a glad cry of ‘Sahib! Sahib! You have come back, and you are well.’ ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I have come back, and I am now well.’ When an Indian gives his loyalty, he gives it unstintingly and without counting the

cost. When we arrived at Talla Kote the headman put two rooms at the disposal of my men, for it was dangerous to sleep anywhere except behind locked doors. On this my bad night, and fully alive to the danger, my men had sat out in the open in case they could be of any help to me, and to keep a kettle on the boil for my tea— if I should return. I cannot remember if I drank the tea, but I can remember my shoes being drawn off by willing hands, and a rug spread over me as I lay down on my bed.

Hours and hours of peaceful sleep, and then a dream. Someone was urgently calling me, and someone was as urgently saying I must not be disturbed. Over and over again the dream was repeated with slight variations, but with no less urgency, until the words penetrated through the fog of sleep and became a reality. ‘You must wake him or he will be very angry.’ And the rejoinder, ‘We will not wake him for he is very tired.’ Ganga Ram was the last speaker, so I called out and told him to bring the man to me. In a minute my tent was besieged by an excited throng of men and boys all eager to tell me that the man-eater had just killed six goats on the far side of the village. While pulling on my shoes I looked over the throng and on seeing Dungar Singh, the lad who was with me when I shot the cubs, I asked him if he knew where the goats had been killed and if he could take me to the spot. ‘Yes, yes,’ he answered eagerly, ‘I know where they were killed and I can take you there.’ Telling the headman to keep the crowd back, I armed myself with my .275 rifle and, accompanied by Dungar Singh, set off through the village.

My sleep had refreshed me, and as there was now no need for me to put my feet down gently— to avoid jarring my head— I was able, for the first time in weeks, to walk freely and without discomfort.

## 9

The day I arrived at Talla Kote, Dungar Singh, the lad who was with me now, had taken me through the village to a narrow saddle from where there was an extensive view into two valleys. The valley to the right fell steeply away in the direction of the Kali river. At the upper end of this valley I had



shot the cubs and wounded the tigress. The other valley, the one to the left, was less steep and from the saddle a goat track ran down into it. It was in this valley that the goats had been killed. Down the goat track the lad now started to run, with me close on his heels. After winding down over steep and broken ground for five or six hundred yards, the track crossed a stream and then continued down the valley on the left bank. Close to where the track crossed the stream there was an open bit of comparatively flat ground. Running from left to right across this open ground was a low ridge of rock, on the far side of which was a little hollow, and lying in the hollow were three goats.

On the way down the hill the lad had told me that round about midday a large flock of goats in charge of ten or fifteen boys was feeding in the hollow, when a tiger— which they suspected was the man-eater— suddenly appeared among them and struck down six goats. On seeing the tiger the boys started yelling and were joined by some men collecting firewood near by. In the general confusion of goats dashing about and human beings yelling, the tiger moved off and no one appeared to have seen in which direction it went. Grabbing hold of three dead goats the men and boys dashed back to the village to give me the news, leaving three goats with broken backs in the hollow.

That the killer of the goats was the wounded man-eater there could be no question, for when I last saw her the previous night she was going straight towards the village. Further, my men told me that an hour or so before my return to camp a *kakar* had barked near the stream, a hundred yards from where they were sitting, and thinking that the animal had barked on seeing me they had built up the fire. It was fortunate that they had done so, for I later found the pug-marks of the tigress where she had skirted round the fire and had then gone through the village, obviously with the object of securing a human victim. Having failed in her quest she had evidently taken cover near the village, and at the first opportunity of securing food had struck down the goats. This she had done in a matter of seconds, while suffering from a wound that made her limp badly.

As I was not familiar with the ground, I asked Dungar Singh in which direction he thought the tigress had gone. Pointing down the valley he said she had probably gone in that direction, for there was heavy jungle farther down. While I was questioning him about this jungle, with the idea of going down and looking for the tigress, a *kalege* pheasant started chattering. On hearing this the lad turned round and looked up the hill, giving me an indication of the direction in which the bird was calling. To our left the hill went up steeply, and growing on it were a few bushes and stunted trees. I knew the tigress would not have attempted to climb this hill, and on seeing me looking at it Dungar Singh said the pheasant was not calling on the hill but in a ravine round the shoulder of it. As we were not within sight of the pheasant, there was only one thing that could have alarmed it, and that was the tigress. Telling Dungar Singh to leave me and run back to the village as fast as he could go, I covered his retreat with my rifle until I considered he was clear of the danger zone and then turned round to look for a suitable place in which to sit.

The only trees in this part of the valley were enormous pines which, as they had no branches for thirty or forty feet, it would be quite impossible to climb. So of necessity I would have to sit on the ground. This would be all right during daylight, but if the tigress delayed her return until nightfall, and preferred human flesh to mutton, I would need a lot of luck to carry me through the hour or two of darkness before the moon rose.

On the low ridge running from left to right on the near side of the hollow was a big flat rock. Near it was another and smaller one. By sitting on this smaller rock I found I could shelter behind the bigger, exposing only my head to the side from which I expected the tigress to come. So here I decided to sit. In front of me was a hollow some forty yards in width with a twenty-foot-high bank on the far side. Above this bank was a ten— to twenty-yard— wide flat stretch of ground sloping down to the right. Beyond this the hill went up steeply. The three goats in the hollow, which were alive when the boys and men ran away, were now dead. When striking them down the tigress had ripped the skin on the back of one of them.

The *kalege* pheasant had now stopped chattering, and I speculated as to whether it had called at the tigress as she was going up the ravine after the lad and I had arrived or whether it had called on seeing the tigress coming back. In the one case it would mean a long wait for me, and in the other a short one. I had taken up my position at 2 p.m., and half an hour later a pair of blue Himalayan magpies came up the valley. These beautiful birds, which do a lot of destruction in the nesting season among tits and other small birds, have an uncanny instinct for finding in a jungle anything that is dead. I heard the magpies long before I saw them, for they are very vocal. On catching sight of the goats they stopped chattering and very cautiously approached. After several false alarms they alighted on the goat with the ripped back and started to feed. For some time a king vulture had been quartering the sky, and now, on seeing the magpies on the goat, he came sailing down and landed as lightly as a feather on the dead branch of a pine tree. These king vultures with their white shirt-fronts, black coats, and red heads and legs, are always the first of the vultures to find a kill. Being smaller than other vultures it is essential for them to be first at the table, for when the others arrive they have to take a back seat.

I welcomed the vulture's coming, for he would provide me with information I lacked. From his perch high up on the pine tree he had an extensive view, and if he came down and joined the magpies it would mean that the tigress had gone, whereas if he remained where he was it would mean that she was lying up somewhere close by. For the next half hour the scene remained unchanged—the magpies continued to feed, and the vulture sat on the dead branch—and then the sun was blotted out by heavy rain-clouds. Shortly after, the *kalege* pheasant started chattering again and the magpies flew screaming down the valley. The tigress was coming, and here, sooner than I had expected, was the chance of shooting her that I had lost the previous night when overcome by vertigo.

A few light bushes on the shoulder of the hill partly obstructed my view in the direction of the ravine, and presently through these bushes I saw the tigress. She was coming, very slowly along the flat bit of ground above the twenty-foot-high bank and was looking straight towards me. With only head exposed and my soft hat pulled clown to my eyes, I knew she would

not notice me if I made no movement. So, with the rifle resting on the flat rock, I sat perfectly still. When she had come opposite to me the tigress sat down, with the bole of a big pine tree directly between us. I could see her head on one side of the tree and her tail and part of her hindquarters on the other. Here she sat for minutes, snapping at the flies that, attracted by her wound, were tormenting her.

## 10

Eight years previously, when the tigress was a comparatively young animal, she had been seriously injured in an encounter with a porcupine. At the time she received this injury she may have had cubs, and unable for the time being to secure her natural prey to feed herself in order to nourish her cubs, she had taken to killing human beings. In doing this she had committed no crime against the laws of Nature. She was a carnivorous animal, and flesh, whether human or animal, was the only food she could assimilate. Under stress of circumstances an animal, and a human being also, will eat food that under normal conditions they are averse to eating. From the fact that during the whole of her man-eating career the tigress had only killed a hundred and fifty human beings— fewer than twenty a year— I am inclined to think that she only resorted to this easily procured form of food when she had cubs and when, owing to her injury, she was unable to get the requisite amount of natural food needed to support herself and her family.

The people of Talla Des had suffered and suffered grievously from the tigress, and for the suffering she had inflicted she was now paying in full. To put her out of her misery I several times aligned the sights of my rifle on her head, but the light, owing to the heavy clouds, was not good enough for me to make sure of hitting a comparatively small object at sixty yards.



Eventually the tigress stood up, took three steps and then stood broadside on to me, looking down at the goats. With my elbows resting on the flat

rock I took careful aim at the spot where I thought her heart would be, pressed the trigger, and saw a spurt of dust go up on the hill on the far side of her. On seeing the dust the thought flashed through my mind that not only had I missed the tigress's heart, but that I had missed the whole animal. And yet, after my careful aim, that could not be. What undoubtedly had happened was that my bullet had gone clean through her without meeting any resistance. At my shot the tigress sprang forward, raced over the flat ground like a very frightened but unwounded animal, and before I could get in another shot, disappeared from view.

Mad with myself for not having killed the tigress when she had given me such a good shot, I was determined now that she would not escape from me. Jumping down from the rock, I sprinted across the hollow, up the twenty-foot bank and along the flat ground until I came to the spot where the tigress had disappeared. Here I found there was a steep forty-foot drop down a loose shale scree. Down this the tigress had gone in great bounds. Afraid to do the same for fear of spraining my ankles, I sat down on my heels and tobogganed to the bottom. At the foot of the scree was a well-used footpath, along which I felt sure the tigress had gone, though the surface was too hard to show pug-marks. To the right of the path was a boulder-strewn stream, the one that Dungar Singh and I had crossed farther up, and flanking the stream was a steep grassy hill. To the left of the path was a hill with a few pine trees growing on it. The path for some distance was straight, and I had run along it for fifty or more yards when I heard a *ghooral* give its alarm sneeze. There was only one place where the *ghooral* could be and that was on the grassy hill to my right. Thinking that the tigress had possibly crossed the stream and gone up this hill, I pulled up to see if I could see her. As I did so, I thought I heard men shouting. Turning around, I looked up in the direction of the village and saw a crowd of men standing on the saddle of the hill. On seeing me look around they shouted again and waved me on, straight along the path. In a moment I was on the run again, and on turning a corner found fresh blood on the path.

The skin of animals is loose. When an animal that is standing still is hit in the body by a bullet and it dashes away at full speed, the hole made in the skin does not coincide with the hole in the flesh, with the result that, as long

as the animal is running at speed, little if any blood flows from the wound. When, however, the animal slows down and the two holes come closer together, blood flows and continues to flow more freely the slower the animal goes. When there is any uncertainty as to whether an animal that has been fired at has been hit or not, the point can be very easily cleared up by going to the exact spot where the animal was when fired at, and looking for cut hairs. These will indicate that the animal was hit, whereas the absence of such hairs will show that it was clean missed.



After going round the corner the tigress had slowed down, but she was still running, as I could see from the blood splashes, and in order to catch up with her I put on a spurt. I had not gone very far when I came to spur jutting out from the hill on my left. Here the path bent back at a very acute angle, and not being able to stop myself, and there being nothing for me to seize hold of on the hillside, I went over the edge of the narrow-path all standing. Ten to fifteen feet below was a small rhododendron sapling, and below the sapling a sheer drop into a dark and evil-looking ravine where the stream, turning at right angles, had cut away the toe of the hill. As I passed the sapling with my heels cutting furrows in the soft earth, I gripped it under my right arm. The sapling, fortunately, was not uprooted, and though it bent it did not break. Easing myself round very gently, I started to kick footholds in the soft loamy hill-face which had a luxuriant growth of maidenhair fern.

The opportunity of catching up with the tigress had gone, but I now had a well-defined blood-trail to follow, so there was no longer any need for me to hurry. The footpath which at first had run north now ran west along the north face of a steep and well-wooded hill. When I had gone for another two hundred yards along the path, I came to flat ground on a shoulder of the hill. This was the limit I would have expected a tiger shot through the body

to have travelled, so I approached the flat ground, on which there was a heavy growth of bracken and scattered bushes, very cautiously.

A tiger that has made up its mind to avenge an injury is the most terrifying animal to be met with in an Indian jungle. The tigress had a very recent injury to avenge and she had demonstrated— by striking down six goats and by springing and dashing away when I fired at her— that the leg wound she had received five days before was no handicap to rapid movement. I felt sure, therefore, that as soon as she became aware that I was following her and she considered that I was within her reach, she would launch an all-out attack on me, which I would possibly have to meet with a single bullet. Drawing back the bolt of the rifle, I examined the cartridge very carefully and satisfied that it was one of a fresh lot I had recently got from Manton in Calcutta, I replaced it in the chamber, put back the bolt, and threw off the safety catch.

The path ran through the bracken, which was waist high and which met over it. The blood trail led along the path into the bracken, and the tigress might be lying up on the path or on the right or the left-hand side of it. So I approached the bracken foot by foot and looking straight ahead for, on these occasions, it is unwise to keep turning the head, when I was within three yards of the bracken I saw a movement a yard from the path on the right. It was the tigress gathering herself together for a spring. Wounded and starving though she was, she was game to fight it out. Her spring, however, was never launched, for, as she rose, my first bullet raked her from end to end, and the second bullet broke her neck.

Days of pain and strain on an empty stomach left me now trembling in every limb, and I had great difficulty in reaching the spot where the path bent back at an acute angle and where, but for the chance dropping of a rhododendron seed, I would have ended my life on the rocks, below.

The entire population of the village, plus my own men, were gathered on the saddle of the hill and on either side of it, and I had hardly raised my hat to wave when, shouting at the top of their voices, the men and boys came swarming down. My six Garhwalis were the first to arrive. Congratulations



over, the tigress was lashed to a pole and six of the proudest Garhwalis in Kumaon carried the Talla Des man-eater in triumph to Talla Kote village. Here the tigress was laid down on a bed of straw for the women and children to see, while I went back to my tent for my first solid meal in many weeks. An hour later with a crowd of people around me, I skinned the tigress.

My first bullet, a .275 soft-nose with split nickel case fired on 7 April, was bushed and firmly fixed in the ball-and-socket joint of the tigress's right shoulder. The second and third bullets, fired as she was falling through the air and climbing up the hill, had missed her. The fourth, fired on 12 April, had gone clean through without striking any bones, and the fifth and sixth had killed her. From her right foreleg and shoulder I found some twenty porcupine quills, ranging in length from two to six inches, which were firmly embedded in muscle and were undoubtedly the cause of the tigress's having become a man-eater.

I spent the following day in partly drying the skin, and three days later I was safely back in my home with my bad time behind me. Baynes very kindly sent for Dungar Singh and his brother, and at a public function at Almora thanked them for the help they had given me and presented them with my token of gratitude.

A week after my return to Naini Tal, Sir Malcolm Hailey gave me an introduction to Colonel Dick, an ear specialist, who treated me for three months in his hospital in Lahore and restored my hearing sufficiently for me to associate with my fellow men without embarrassment, and gave me back the joy of hearing music and the song of birds.



## Epilogue

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THE STORY OF THE TALLA DES MAN-EATER — which I refrained from telling until I had written *Jungle Lore*— has now been told. I am aware that to many the story will seem incredible, and to none more so than to those who have themselves hunted tigers. None knows better than I that the hunting of tigers on foot is not a popular sport, and that the hunting of man-eaters on foot is even less so. I also know that the following-up of a wounded tiger on foot is a task that is sought by none and dreaded by all. And yet, knowing these things, I have told of the hunting of a man-eating tiger on foot, not only by day but also by night, and the chasing on foot of a wounded tiger. Small wonder, then, if my story to many should seem incredible.

There are few places in Kumaon where a fortnight's holiday could be more pleasantly spent than along the eastern border of the Almora district. Hiking in the Himalayas is becoming a very popular pastime, and I could suggest no more pleasant hike for a sportsman or for a party of young army men or students than the following:

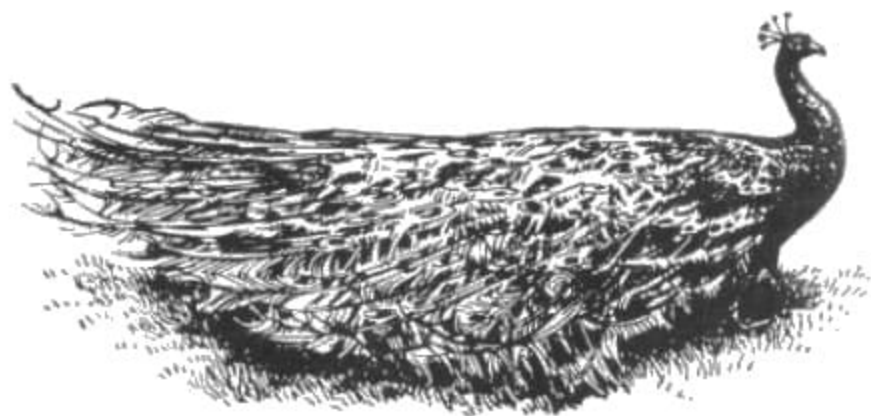
Start from Tanakpur, but before doing so get the *peshkar* to give you a tahsil peon to show you where the epic fight took place between the elephant and the two tigers. From Tanakpur go via Baramdeo to Purnagiri. Here, after doing *darshan* at the temple, learn all you can from the High Priest and the temple pujaris about the lights that appear on the far side of the Sarda, and similar manifestations, as for example the fire with an old man sitting near it telling his beads that is to be seen during certain seasons at the foot of the Pindari glacier. From Purnagiri a track used by the priests will take you to Thak village. This is beautifully situated, and while you rest and admire the view, get the headman or any of the other men sitting round to give you his version of the shooting of the Thak and of the Chuka man-eating tigers. Tewari, a relative of the headman and as fine a type of a hill Brahmin as you will see, will then show you where his brother whose body he helped me find was killed, the mango tree with a spring at its roots, and

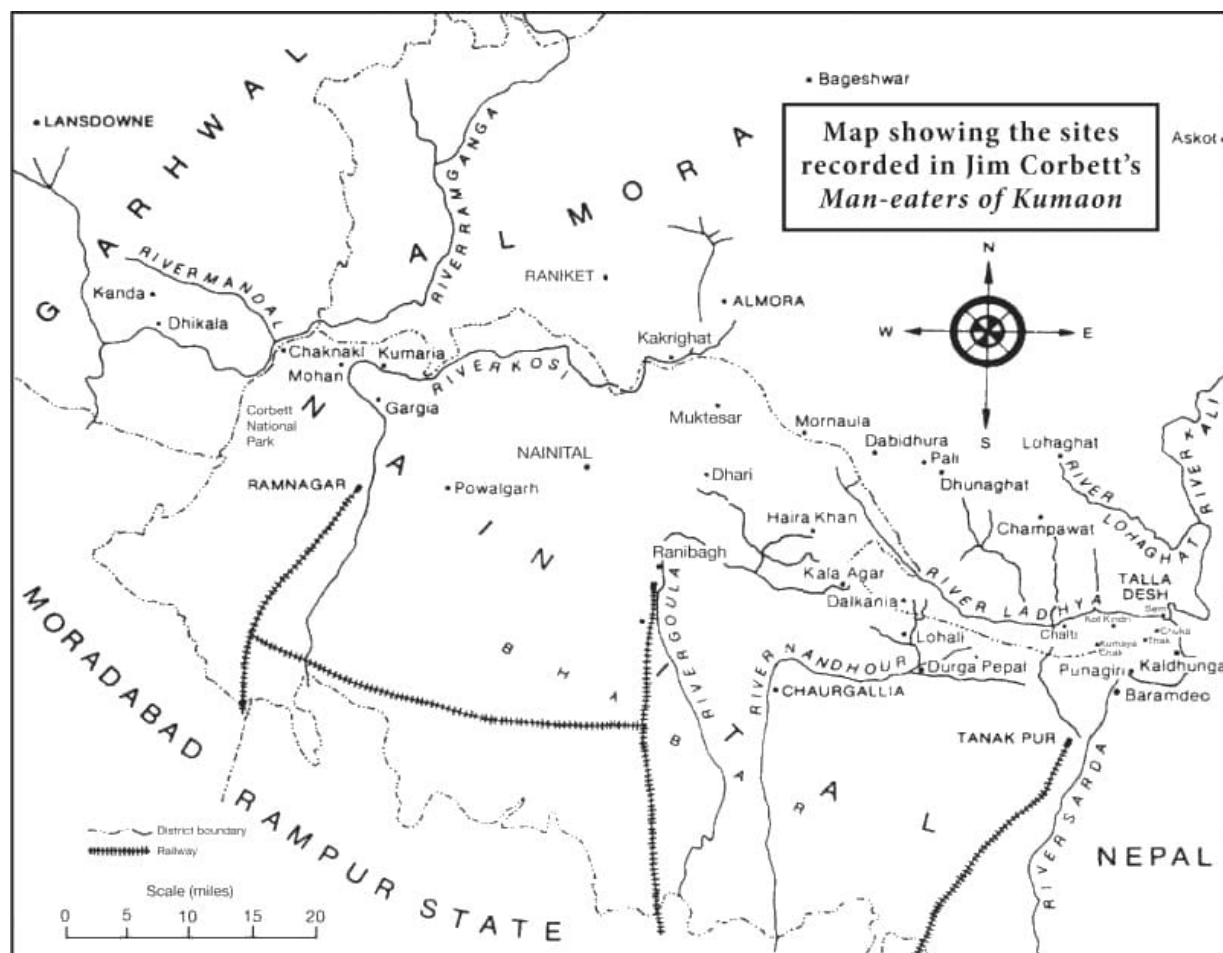
the rock on the way down to Chuka where I shot the Thak man-eater. He will also, if you have the time, show you the *ficus* tree from which I shot the Chuka man-eater. At Chuka inquire for Kunwar Singh, and hear his story of the hunting of the two tigers.

From Chuka to Talla Kote is a long march, and it will be advisable to start at the crack of dawn. Having forded the Ladhya near its junction with the Sarda, you will come to Sem. The headman of Sem, who was a boy when I knew him, will show you where the man-eater killed his mother while she was cutting grass near their home. With Sem behind you and a stiff climb accomplished, you will pass the small hamlet where I spent a night under a mango tree. After going over the ridge you will come to a forest road. Take the turn to the left and follow the road until you come to a stream. Cross the stream and the small patch of open ground on which my 40-lb tent was pitched, and you have reached your destination, Talla Kote.

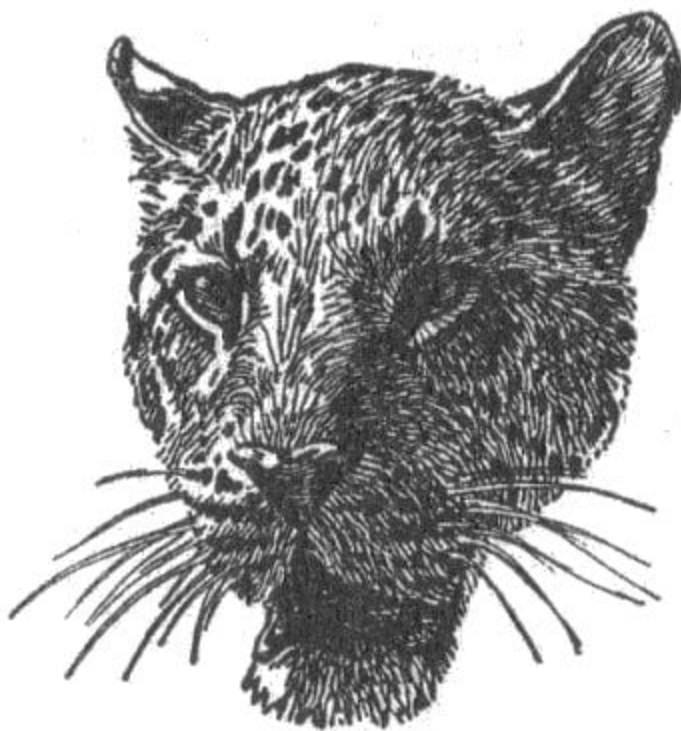
Dungar Singh, malguzar (land-holder) of Talla Kote, will now be about forty years of age. Give him my salams and ask him to take you to the ling or saddle from which there is an extensive view into two valleys. Face first the valley to the east and get Dungar Singh to point out the bush where his mother was killed, the oak tree under which she was eaten, the wyran field on which the young tigers were shot, and the grassy hill up which the wounded tigress went. Then turn round, walk a few steps, and face the valley to the west. Dungar Singh will now point out where the six goats were killed, where the tigress was standing when my bullet went through her, and the footpath along which she dashed and along which I ran after her.

The hunting of no other tiger has ever been witnessed by a greater number of non-participants than witnessed the hunting of the Talla Des man-eating tiger. Some of those will have passed away, but many will still remain and they will not have forgotten my visit or the thrilling events of the week I spent with them.





# THE MAN-EATING LEOPARD OF RUDRAPRAYAG

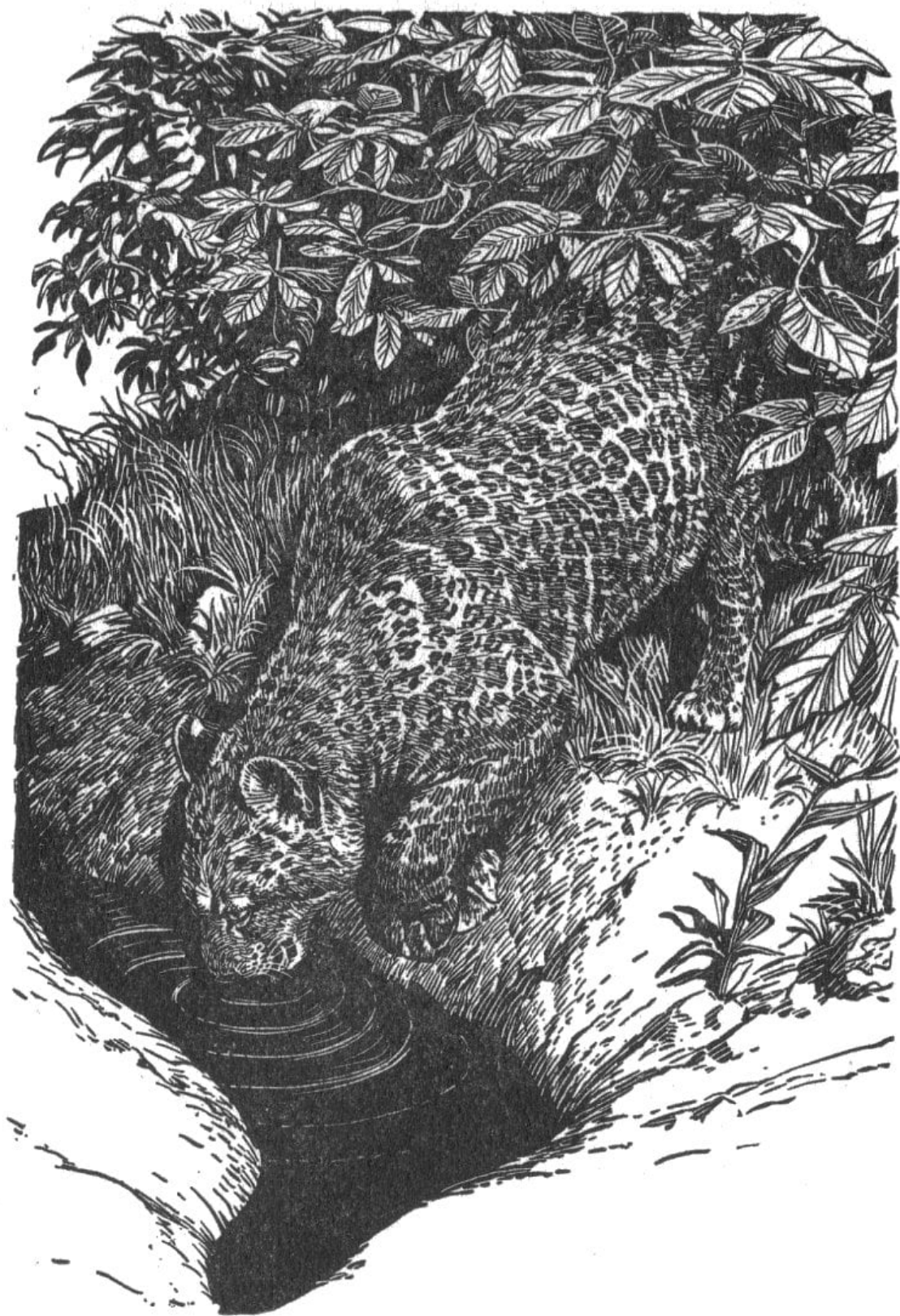


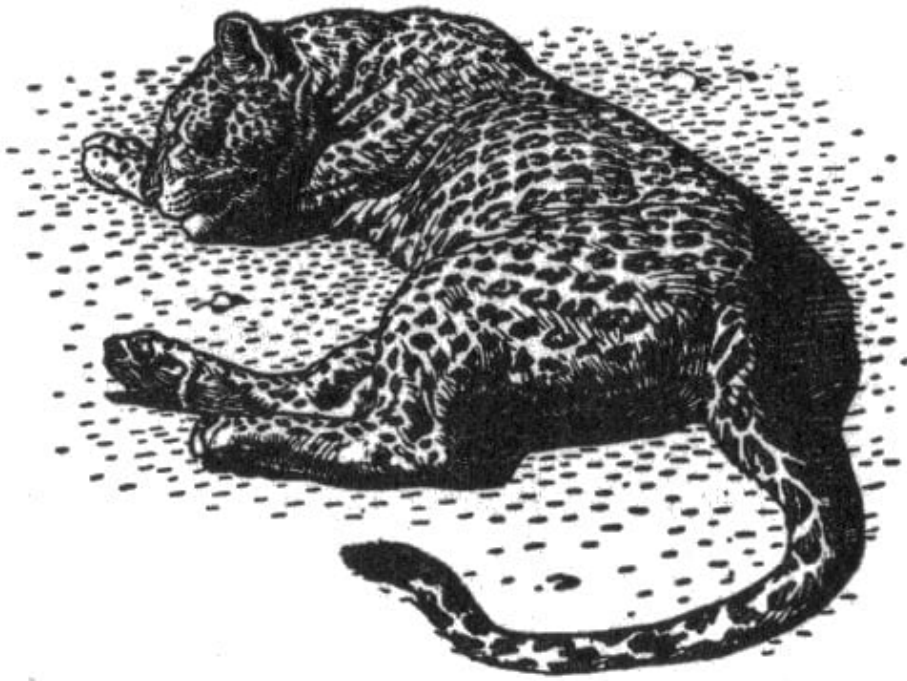
*By*  
JIM CORBETT

*Illustrated by*  
RAYMOND SHEPPARD

Dedicated  
to the victims  
of the man-eating  
leopard of  
Rudraprayag



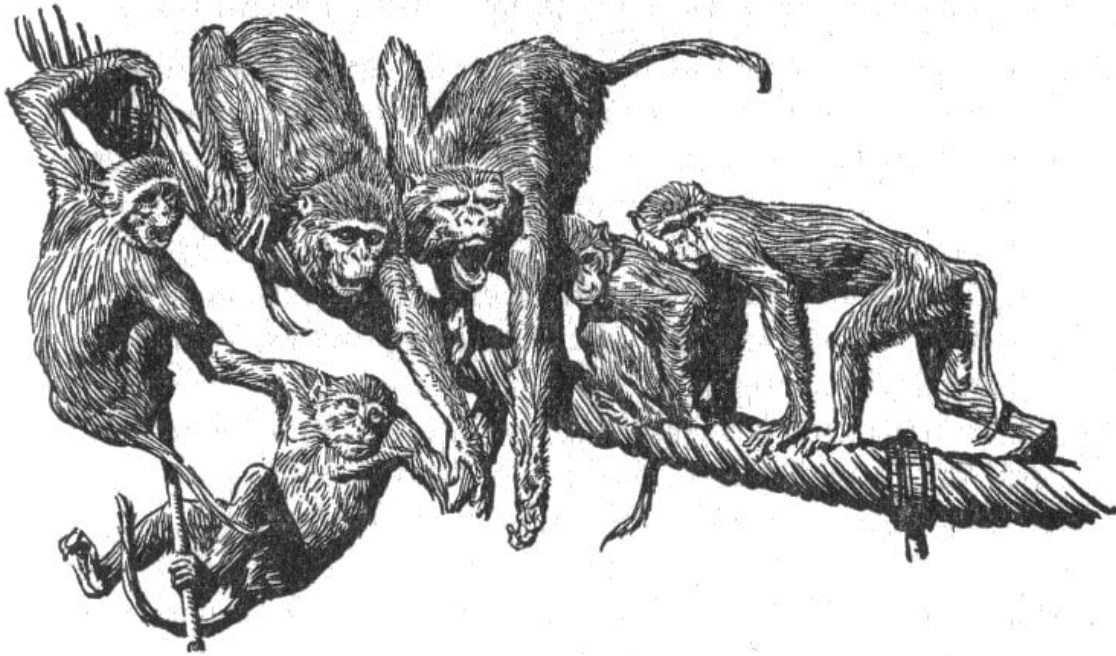




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## *The Pilgrim Road*

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**I**F YOU ARE A HINDU FROM the sun-scorched plains of India and you desire— as all good Hindus do— to perform the pilgrimage to the age-old shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath, you must start on your pilgrimage from Hardwar and, in order to acquire a full measure of the merits vouch-safed to you for the correct performance of the pilgrimage, you must walk every step of the way from Hardwar to Kedarnath and, thence, over the mountain track to Badrinath, barefoot.

Having purified yourself by immersion in the sacred Har-ki-pauri pool, done *darshan* at the many shrines and temples in Hardwar, and added your mite to their coffers, you must not omit to toss a coin within reach of the festering stumps— which once were hands— of the lepers who line the narrowest part of the pilgrim road above the sacred pool, for if you make this omission, they will call down curses on your head. What matter if these unfortunate ones have wealth beyond your dreams secreted in their filthy

rags, or in the rock caves they call their homes? The curses of such as they were best avoided, and immunity will cost you but a few coppers.

You have now done all that custom and religion require of a good Hindu and are at liberty to start on your long and hard pilgrimage.

The first place of interest you will come to after leaving Hardwar is Rishikesh. Here you will make your first acquaintance with the Kalakamli Wallahas, so called because of the black blanket their founder wore— and which many of his disciples still wear— in the form of a habit or loose cloak bound round the middle with a cord of goat's hair; and who are renowned throughout the land for their good deeds. I do not know if any of the other religious brotherhoods you will meet on your pilgrimage have any claim to renown, but I do know that the Kalakamli Wallahas have such a claim, and justly so, for out of the offerings they receive at their many shrines and temples, they have built— and they maintain— hospitals, dispensaries, and pilgrim shelters, and they feed the poor and the needy.

With Rishikesh behind you, you will come next to Lachman Jhula, where the pilgrim road crosses from the right to the left bank of the Ganges on a suspension bridge. Here beware of the red monkeys who infest the bridge, for they are even more importunate than the lepers of Hardwar, and if you omit to propitiate them with offerings of sweets, or parched gram, your passage across the long and narrow bridge is likely to be both difficult and painful.

Three-day's journey up the left bank of the Ganges and you have reached the ancient capital of Garhwal— Shreenagar— an historic, religious, and trading centre of considerable importance and of great beauty, nestling in a wide, open valley surrounded by high mountains. It was here, in the year 1805, that the forebears of the Garhwali soldiers who have fought so gallantly in two world wars made their last, and unsuccessful, stand against the Gurkha invaders, and it is a matter of great regret to the people of Garhwal that their ancient city of Shreenagar, together with the palaces of their kings, was swept away, to the last stone, by the bursting of the Gohna Lake dam in 1894. This dam, caused by a landslide in the valley of the

Birehi Ganga, a tributary of the Ganges, was 11,000 feet wide at the base, 2,000 feet wide at the summit, and 900 feet high and, when it burst, ten billion cubic feet of water were released in the short space of six hours. So well was the bursting of the dam timed that though the flood devastated the valley of the Ganges right down to Hardwar and swept away every bridge, only one family was lost, the members of which had returned to the danger-zone after having been forcibly removed from it.

From Shreenagar you have to face a stiff climb to Chatikhal, which is compensated for by the magnificent views you will get of the Ganges valley and of the eternal snows above Kedarnath.

A day's march from Chatikhal and you see in front of you Golabrai with its row of grass-thatched pilgrim shelters, a one-roomed stone-built house, and its drinking trough. This big and imposing drinking trough is fed by a tiny crystal-clear stream which, in summer, is sedately conducted down the mountain-side by a series of channels rough-hewn from pine saplings. At other seasons of the year the water cascades unconfined and merrily over rocks draped with moss and maidenhair fern, through luxuriant beds of vivid green watercress and sky-blue strobilanthes.

A hundred yards beyond the pilgrim shelters, and on the right-hand side of the road, stands a mango tree. This tree and the two-storied house above it which is the home of the pundit, who owns the Golabrai pilgrim shelters, are worthy of note, for they play an important part in the tale I have to tell.

Another two miles, along the last flat bit of ground you will see for many a day, and you have reached Rudraprayag, where you and I, my pilgrim friend, must part, for your way lies across the Alaknanda and up the left bank of the Mandakini to Kedarnath, while mine lies over the mountains to my home in Naini Tal.

The road in front of you, which has been trodden by the feet of millions of pilgrims like you, is excessively steep and incredibly rough; and you, whose lungs have never breathed air above sea level, who have never climbed anything higher than the roof of your house, and whose feet have

never trodden anything harder than yielding sand, will suffer greatly. Times there will be, a-many, when, gasping for breath, you toil up the face of steep mountains on feet torn and bleeding by passage over rough rocks, sharp shale, and frozen ground, when you will question whether the prospective reward you seek is worth the present price you pay in suffering; but being a good Hindu you will toil on, comforting yourself with the thought that merit is not gained without suffering, and the greater the suffering in this world, the greater the reward in the next.





## *The Man-Eater*

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‘P RAYAG’ IS THE HINDI WORD FOR ‘confluence’. At Rudraprayag, two rivers— the Mandakini coming down from Kedarnath, and the Alaknanda from Badrinath— meet, and from here onwards the combined waters of the two rivers are known to all Hindus as Ganga Mai, and to the rest of the world as the Ganges. [The author is mistaken; the river continues as Alaknanda upto Devaprayag, where it becomes the Ganges on meeting the Bhagirathi.]

When an animal, be it a leopard or be it a tiger, becomes a man-eater, it is given a place-name for purposes of identification. The name so given to a man-eater does not necessarily imply that the animal began its man-eating career at, or that all its kills were confined to, that particular place. It is quite natural that the leopard which started its man-eating career at a small village twelve miles from Rudraprayag, on the Kedarnath pilgrim route, should have been known for the rest of its career as the Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag.

Leopards do not become man-eaters for the same reasons that tigers do. Though I hate to admit it, our leopards— the most beautiful and the most



graceful of all the animals in our jungles, and who when cornered or wounded are second to none in courage— are scavengers to the extent that they will, when driven by hunger, eat any dead thing they find in the jungle, just as lions will in the African bush.

The people of Garhwal are Hindus, and as such cremate their dead. The cremation invariably takes place on the bank of a stream or river in order that the ashes may be washed down into the Ganges and eventually into the sea. As most of the villages are situated high up on the hills, while the streams of rivers are in many cases miles away down in the valleys, it will be realized that a funeral entails a considerable tax on the manpower of a small community when, in addition to the carrying party, labour has to be provided to collect and carry the fuel needed for the cremation. In normal times these rites are carried out very effectively; but when disease in epidemic form sweeps through the hills, and the inhabitants die faster than they can be disposed of, a very simple rite, which consists of placing a live coal in the mouth of the deceased, is performed in the village, and the body is then carried to the edge of the hill and cast into the valley below.

A leopard, in an area in which his natural food is scarce, finding these bodies, very soon acquires a taste for human flesh, and when the disease dies down and normal conditions are re-established, he, very naturally, on finding his food-supply cut off, takes to killing human beings. In the wave of epidemic influenza that swept through the country in 1918 and that cost India over a million lives, Garhwal suffered very severely, and it was at the end of this epidemic that the Garhwal man-eater made his appearance.

The first human kill credited to the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag is recorded as having taken place at Bainji village on 9 June 1918, and the last kill for which the man-eater was responsible took place at Bhainswara village on 14 April 1926. Between these two dates the number of human kills recorded by Government was one hundred and twenty-five.

While I do not think that this figure, of one hundred and twenty-five, is our to the extent claimed by Government officials who served in Garhwal at that time and by residents in the area in which the man-eater was operating,

I do know that the figure given is not correct, for some kills which took place while I was on the ground have not been shown in the records.

In crediting the man-eater with fewer kills than he was actually responsible for, I do not wish to minimize in any way the sufferings endured by the people of Garhwal for eight long years, nor do I wish to detract in any way from the reputation of the animals which the people of Garhwal claim as having been the most famous man-eating leopard of all time.

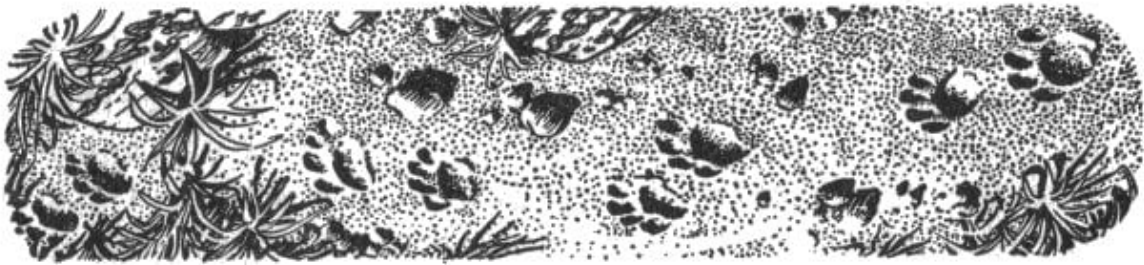
However, be the number of human kills what they may, Garhwal can claim that this leopard was the most publicized animal that has ever lived, for he was mentioned— to my knowledge— in the press of the United Kingdom, America, Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Malaya, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and in most of the dailies and weeklies in India.

In addition to this newspaper publicity, tales of the man-eater were carried to every part of India by the sixty thousand pilgrims who annually visit the shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath.

The procedure laid down by Government in all cases of human beings alleged to have been killed by man-eaters is for the relatives or friends of the deceased to lodge a report with the village *patwari* as soon after the occurrence as possible. On receipt of the report the *patwari* proceeds to the spot, and if the body of the victim has not been found before his arrival he organizes a search party, and with their aid endeavours to find the victim. If the body has been found before his arrival, or if the search party finds it, the *patwari* holds an inquiry on the spot and when satisfied that it is a genuine kill by a man-eater, and not a case of murder, he gives the relatives permission to remove the remains for cremation or for burial, according to the caste or creed of the victim. The kill is duly recorded in his register against the man-eater operating in that area, and a full report of occurrence is submitted to the administrative head of the district— the Deputy Commissioner— who also keeps a register in which all the man-eater's kills are recorded. In the event, however, of the body, or any portion of it, not being found— as sometimes happens, for man-eaters have an annoying

habit of carrying their victims for long distances— the case is held over for further inquiry, and the man-eater is not credited with the kill. Again, when people are mauled by a man-eater and subsequently die from their injuries, the man-eater concerned is not credited with their deaths.

It will thus be seen that though the system adopted for recording the kills of man-eaters is as good as it can be, it is possible for one of these abnormal animals to be responsible for more human kills than he is finally credited with, especially when his operations extend over a long period of years.





## *Terror*

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THE WORD 'TERROR' IS SO generally and universally used in connection with everyday trivial matters that it is apt to fail to convey when intended to do so, its real meaning. I should like therefore to give you some idea of what terror— real terror— meant to the fifty thousand inhabitants living in the five hundred square miles of Garhwal in which the man-eater was operating, and to the sixty thousand pilgrims who annually passed through that area between the years 1918 and 1926. And I will give you a few instances to show you what grounds the inhabitants, and the pilgrims, had for that terror.

No curfew order has ever been more strictly enforced, and more implicitly obeyed, than the curfew imposed by the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag.

During the hours of sunlight life in that area carried on in a normal way. Men went long distances to the bazaars to transact business, or to outlying

villages to visit relatives or friends; women went up the mountainsides to cut grass for thatching or for cattle-fodder; children went to school or into the jungles to graze goats or to collect dry sticks, and, if it was summer, pilgrims, either singly or in large numbers, toiled along the pilgrim routes on their way to and from the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath.

As the sun approached the western horizon and the shadows lengthened, the behaviour of the entire population of the area underwent a very sudden and a very noticeable change. Men who had sauntered to the bazaars or to outlying villages were hurrying home; women carrying great bundles of grass were stumbling down the steep mountain-sides; children who had loitered on their way from school, or who were late in bringing in their flocks of goats or the dry sticks they had been sent out to collect, were being called by anxious mothers, and the weary pilgrims were being urged by any local inhabitant who passed them to hurry to shelter.

When night came, an ominous silence brooded over the whole area— no movement and no sound anywhere. The entire local population was behind fast-closed doors and, in many cases, had sought further protection by building additional doors. Those of the pilgrims who had not been fortunate enough to find accommodation inside houses were huddled close together in pilgrim shelters. And all, whether in house or shelter, were silent for fear of attracting the dread man-eater.

This is what terror meant to the people of Garhwal, and to the pilgrims, for eight long years.

I will now give a few instances to show you what grounds there were for that terror.

A boy, an orphan aged fourteen, was employed to look after a flock of forty goats. He was of the depressed— untouchable— class, and each evening when he returned with his charges he was given his food and then shut into a small room with the goats. The room was on the ground floor of a long row of double-storied buildings and was immediately below the room occupied by the boy's master, the owner of the goats. To prevent the

goats crowding in on him as he slept, the boy had fenced off the far left-hand corner of the room.

This room had no windows and only one door, and when the boy and the goats were safely inside, the boy's master pulled the door to, and fastened it by passing the hasp, which was attached by a short length of chain to the door, over the staple fixed in the lintel. A piece of wood was then inserted in the staple to keep the hasp in place, and on his side of the door the boy, for his better safety, rolled a stone against it.

On the night the orphan was gathered to his fathers; his master asserts the door was fastened as usual, and I have no reason to question the truth of his assertion. In support of it, the door showed many deep claw-marks, and it is possible that in his attempts to claw open the door the leopard displaced the piece of wood that was keeping the hasp in place, after which it would have been easy for him to push the stone aside and enter the room.

Forty goats packed into a small room, one corner of which was fenced off, could not have left the intruder much space to manoeuvre in, and it is left to conjecture whether the leopard covered the distance from the door to the boy's corner of the room over the backs of the goats or under their bellies, for at this stage of the proceedings all the goats must have been on their feet.

It were best to assume that the boy slept through all the noise the leopard must have made when trying to force open the door, and that the goats must have made when the leopard had entered the room, and that he did not cry for help to deaf ears, only screened from him and the danger that menaced him by a thin plank.

After killing the boy in the fenced-off corner, the leopard carried him across the empty room—the goats had escaped into the night—down a steep hillside, and then over some terraced fields to a deep boulder-strewn ravine. It was here, after the sun had been up a few hours, that the master found all that the leopard had left of his servant.

Incredible as it may seem, not one of the forty goats had received so much as a scratch.

A neighbour had dropped in to spend the period of a long smoke with a friend. The room was L-shaped and the only door in it was not visible from where the two men sat on the floor with their backs to the wall, smoking. The door was shut but not fastened, for up to that night there had been no human kills in the village.

The room was in darkness and the owner of it had just passed the hookah to his friend when it fell to the ground, scattering a shower of burning charcoal and tobacco. Telling his friend to be more careful or he would set the blanket on which they were sitting on fire, the man bent forward to gather up the embers and, as he did so, the door came into view. A young moon was near setting and, silhouetted against it, the man saw a leopard carrying his friend through the door.

When recounting the incident to me a few days later the man said: 'I am speaking the truth, sahib, when I tell you I never heard even so much as the intake of a breath, or any other sound, from my friend who was sitting only an arm's-length from me, either when the leopard was killing him, or when it was carrying him away. There was nothing I could do for my friend, so I waited until the leopard had been gone some little while, and then I crept up to the door and hastily shut and secured it.'

The wife of the headman of a village was ill from a fever, and two friends had been called in to nurse her.

There were two rooms in the house. The outer room had two doors, one opening on to a small flagged courtyard, and the other leading into the inner room. This outer room also had a narrow slip of a window set some four feet above floor level, and in this window, which was open, stood a large brass vessel containing drinking-water for the sick woman.

Except for the one door giving access to the outer room, the inner room had no other opening in any of its four walls.

The door leading out on to the courtyard was shut and securely fastened, and the door between the two rooms was wide open.

The three women in the inner room were lying on the ground, the sick woman in the middle with a friend on either side of her. The husband in the outer room was on a bed on the side of the room nearest the window, and on the floor beside his bed, where its light would shine into the inner room, was a lantern, turned down low to conserve oil.





Round about midnight, when the occupants of both the rooms were asleep, the leopard entered by way of the narrow slip of a window; avoiding in some miraculous way knocking over the brass vessel which nearly filled it, skirted round the man's low bed and, entering the inner room, killed the sick woman. It was only when the heavy brass vessel crashed to the floor as the leopard attempted to lift its victim through the window that the sleepers awoke.

When the lantern had been turned up the woman who had been sick was discovered lying huddled up under the window, and in her throat were four great teeth-marks.

A neighbour, whose wife had been one of the nurses on that night, when relating the occurrence to me said, 'The woman was very ill from her fever and was likely to have died in any case, so it was fortunate that the leopard selected her.'

Two Gujars were moving their herd of thirty buffaloes from one grazing-ground to another, and accompanying them was the twelve-year-old daughter of the older of the two men, who were brothers.

They were strangers to the locality and either had not heard of the man-eater or, which is more probable, thought the buffaloes would give them all the protection they needed.

Near the road and at an elevation of eight thousand feet was a narrow strip of flat ground below which was a sickle-shaped terraced field, some quarter of an acre in extent, which had long been out of cultivation. The men selected this site for their camp and having cut stakes from the jungle which surrounded them on all sides, they drove them deep into the field and tethered their buffaloes in a long row.

After the evening meal prepared by the girl had been eaten, the party of three laid their blankets on the narrow strip of ground between the road and the buffaloes and went to sleep.

It was a dark night, and some time towards the early hours of the morning the men were awakened by the booming of their buffalo-bells and by the snorting of the frightened animals. Knowing from long experience that these sounds indicated the presence of carnivora, the men lit a lantern and went among the buffaloes to quieten them, and to see that none had broken the ropes tethering them to the stakes.

The men were absent only a few minutes. When they returned to their sleeping-place they found that the girl whom they had left asleep was missing. On the blanket on which she had been lying were big splashes of blood.

When daylight came, the father and the uncle followed the blood trail. After skirting round the row of tethered buffaloes, it went across the narrow field and down the steep hillside for a few yards, to where the leopard had eaten his kill.

‘My brother was born under an unlucky star, sahib, for he has no son, and he had only this one daughter who was to have been married shortly and to whom he looked in the fullness of time to provide him with an heir, and now the leopard has come and eaten her.’

I could go on and on, for there were many kills, and each one has its own tragic story, but I think I have said enough to convince you that the people of Garhwal had ample reason to be terrified of the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag, especially when it is remembered that Garhwalis are intensely superstitious and that, added to their fear of physical contact with the leopard, was their even greater fear of the supernatural, of which I shall give you an example.

I set out from the small one-roomed Rudraprayag Inspection Bungalow one morning just as day was breaking, and as I stepped off the veranda I saw in the dust, where the ground had been worn away by human feet, the pug-marks of the man-eater.

The pug-marks were perfectly fresh and showed that the leopard had stepped out of the veranda only a few minutes in advance of me, and from

the direction in which they were pointing it was evident that the leopard, after his fruitless visit to the bungalow, was making for the pilgrim road some fifty yards away.

Tracking between the bungalow and the road was not possible owing to the hard surface of the ground, but as I reached the gate I saw the pug-marks were heading in the direction of Golabrai. A large flock of sheep and goats had gone down the road the previous evening, and in the dust they had kicked up the leopard's tracks showed up as clearly as they would have on fresh-fallen snow.

I had, by then, become quite familiar with the man-eater's pug-marks and could with little difficulty have distinguished them from the pug-marks of any hundred leopards.

A lot can be learnt from the pug-marks of carnivora, as for instance the sex, age, and size of the animal. I had examined the pug-marks of the man-eater very carefully the first time I had seen them, and I knew he was an out-sized male leopard, long past his prime.

As I followed the tracks of the man-eater on this morning I could see that he was only a few minutes ahead of me, and that he was moving at a slow, even pace.

The road, which had no traffic on it at this early hour of the morning, wound in and out of a number of small ravines, and as it was possible that the leopard might on this occasion break his rule of never being out after daylight, I crept round each corner with the utmost care until I found, a mile farther on, where the leopard had left the road and gone up a great track into dense scrub and tree jungle.

A hundred yards from where the leopard left the road there was a small field, in the centre of which was a thorn enclosure, erected by the owner of the field to encourage packmen to camp there and fertilize it. In this enclosure was the flock of sheep and goats that had come down the road the previous evening.

The owner of the flock, a rugged fellow who by the looks of him had been packing trade commodities up and down the pilgrim road for nigh on half a century, was just removing the thornbush closing the entrance to the enclosure when I came up. In reply to my inquiries he informed me that he had seen nothing of the leopard but that, just as dawn was breaking, his two sheep-dogs had given tongue and, a few minutes later, a *kakar* had barked in the jungle above the road.

When I asked the old packman if he would sell me one of his goats, he asked for what purpose it was wanted; and when I told him it was to tie up for the man-eater, he walked through the opening in the fence, replaced the bush, accepted one of my cigarettes, and sat down on a rock by the side of the road.

We remained smoking for a while, with my question still unanswered, and then the man began to talk.

‘You, sahib, are undoubtedly he whom I have heard tell of on my way down from my village near Badrinath, and it grieves me that you should have come all this long way from your home on a fruitless errand. The evil spirit that is responsible for all the human deaths in this area is not an animal, as you think it is, that can be killed by ball or shot, or by any of the other means that you have tried and that others have tried before you; and in proof of what I say I will tell you a story while I smoke this second cigarette. The story was told to me by my father, who, as everyone knows, had never been heard to tell a lie.’

‘My father was a young man then, and I unborn, when an evil spirit, like the one that is now troubling this land, made its appearance in our village, and all said it was a leopard. Men, women, and children were killed in their homes and every effort was made, as has been made here, to kill the animal. Traps were set, and far-famed marksmen sat in trees and fired ball and shot at the leopard; and when all these attempts to kill it had failed, a great terror seized the people and none dared leave the shelter of his home between the hours of sunset and sunrise.’

‘And then the headmen of my father’s village, and of the villages round about, bade all the men attend a panchayat, and when all were assembled the panch addressed the meeting and said they were assembled to devise some fresh means to rid themselves of this man-eating leopard. Then an old man, fresh back from the burning-ghat, whose grandson had been killed the previous night, arose and said it was no leopard that had entered his house and killed his grandson as he lay asleep by his side, but one from among their own community who, when he craved for human flesh and blood, assumed the semblance of a leopard, and that such a one could not be killed by the methods already tried, as had been amply proved, and could only be killed by fire. His suspicions, he said, fell on the fat *sadhu* who lived in the hut near the ruined temple.’

‘At this there was a great uproar, some exclaiming that the old man’s sorrow at the loss of his grandson had demented him; others averring he was right. And these later recalled that the *sadhu* had arrived at the village at about the time the killings had started, and it was further recalled that on the day succeeding a killing the *sadhu* had been wont to sleep all day, stretched on his bed in the sun.’

‘When order had been restored the matter was long debated and the panchayat eventually decided that no immediate action would be taken, but that the *sadhu*’s movements should in future be watched. The assembled men were then divided into three parties, the first party to start its watch from the night the next kill could be expected; for the kills had taken place at more or less regular intervals.’

‘During the nights the first and the second parties were on watch, the *sadhu* did not leave his hut.’

‘My father was with the third party, and at nightfall he silently took up his position. Soon after, the door of the hut slowly opened, and the *sadhu* emerged and vanished into the night. Some hours later an agonized scream came floating down on the night air from the direction of a charcoal-burner’s hut far up the mountain-side, and thereafter there was silence.’

‘No man of my father’s party closed an eye that night, and as the grey dawn was being born in the east they saw the *sadhu* hurrying home, and his hands and his mouth were dripping blood.’

‘When the *sadhu* had gone inside his hut and had closed the door, the watchers went up to it, and fastened it from the outside by passing the chain that was dangling from it over the staple in the lintel. Then they went each to his haystack and returned with a big bundle of straw, and when the sun rose that morning there was nothing but smouldering ash where the hut had been. From that day the killing stopped.’

‘Suspicion has not yet fallen on any one of the many *sadhus* in these parts, but when it does the method employed in my father’s time will be adopted in mine, and until that day comes, the people of Garhwal must suffer.’

‘You have asked if I will sell you a goat. I will not sell you a goat, sahib, for I have none to spare. But if, after hearing my story, you still want an animal to tie up for what you think is a man-eating leopard, I will lend you one of my sheep. If it is killed you shall pay me its price, and if it is not killed no money shall pass between us. Today and tonight I rest here, and tomorrow at the rising of the Bhootia star I must be on my way.’

Near sundown that evening I returned to the thorn enclosure and my packman friend very cheerfully let me select from his flock a fat sheep which I considered was heavy enough to give the leopard two nights’ feed. This sheep I tied in the scrub jungle close to the path up which the leopard had gone some twelve hours earlier.

Next morning I was up betimes. As I left the bungalow I again saw the pug-marks of the man-eater where he had stepped off the veranda, and at the gate I found he had come up the road from the direction of Golabrai, and, after calling at the bungalow, had gone away towards the Rudraprayag bazaar.

The fact that the leopard was trying to secure a human kill was proof that he had no interest in the sheep I had provided for him, and I was therefore

not surprised to find that he had not eaten any portion of the sheep which he had apparently killed shortly after I had tied it up.

‘Go back to your home, sahib, and save your time and your money,’ was the parting advice of the old packman as he whistled to his flock, and headed down the road for Hardwar.

A parallel case, happily without as tragic an ending, occurred a few years previously near Rudraprayag.

Incensed at the killing of their relatives and friends, and convinced that a human being was responsible for their deaths, an angry crowd of men seized an unfortunate *sadhu* of Kothgi village, Dasjulapatty, but before they were able to wreak their vengeance on him Philip Mason, then Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal, who was camping in the vicinity, arrived on the scene. Seeing the temper of the crowd, and being a man of great experience, Mason said he had no doubt that the real culprit had been apprehended but that before the *sadhu* was lynched justice demanded that his guilt should be established. To this end he suggested that the *sadhu* should be placed under arrest and closely guarded, night and day. To this suggestion the crowd agreed, and for seven days and seven nights the *sadhu* was carefully guarded by the police, and as carefully watched by the populace. On the eighth morning, when the guard and the watchers were being changed, word was brought that a house in a village some miles away had been broken into the previous night, and a man carried off.

The populace raised no objection to the *sadhu* being released that day, contenting themselves by saying that on this occasion the wrong man had been apprehended, but that next time no mistake would be made.

In Garhwal all kills by man-eaters are attributed to sadhus, and in Naini Tal and Almora districts all such kills are attributed to the Bokhsars, who dwell in the unhealthy belt of grass at the foot of the hills called the Terai, living chiefly on game.

The sadhus are believed to kill for the lust of human flesh and blood, and the Bokhsars are believed to kill for the jewellery their victims are wearing,



or for other valuables they have on their person, More women than men have been killed by man-eaters in Naini Tal and Almora districts, but for this there is a better reason than the one given.

I have lived too long in silent places to be imaginative. Even so there were times a-many during the months I spent at Rudraprayag sitting night after night— on one occasion for twenty-eight nights in succession— watching bridges, or cross-roads, or approaches to villages, or over animal or human kills, when I could imagine the man-eater as being a big, light-coloured animal— for so he had appeared to me the first time that I saw him— with the body of a leopard and the head of a fiend.

A fiend who, while watching me through the long night hours, rocked and rolled with silent fiendish laughter at my vain attempts to outwit him, and licked his lips in anticipation of the time when, finding me off my guard for one brief moment, he would get the opportunity he was waiting for, of burying his teeth in my throat.

It may be asked what the Government was doing all the years the Rudraprayag man-eater menaced the people of Garhwal. I hold no brief for the Government, but after having spent ten weeks on the ground, during which time I walked many hundreds of miles and visited most of the villages in the affected area, I assert that the Government did everything in its power to remove the menace. Rewards were offered: the local population believed they amounted to ten thousand rupees in cash and the gift of two villages, sufficient inducement to make each one of the four thousand licensed gun-holders of Garhwal a prospective slayer of the man-eater. Picked shikaris were employed on liberal wages and were promised special rewards if their efforts were successful. More than three hundred special gun licences over and above the four thousand in force were granted for the specific purpose of shooting the man-eater. Men of the Garhwal Regiments stationed in Lansdowne were permitted to take their rifles with them when going home on leave, or were provided with sporting arms by their officers. Appeals were made through the press to sportsmen all over India to assist in the destruction of the leopard. Scores of traps of the drop-door type, with goats as bait, were erected on approaches to villages and on roads

frequented by the man-eater. Patwaris and other Government officials were supplied with poison for the purpose of poisoning human kills, and, last but not least, Government servants, often at great personal risk, spent all the time they could spare from their official duties in pursuit of the man-eater.

The total results from all these many and combined efforts were a slight gunshot wound which creased the pad of the leopard's left hind foot and shot away a small piece of skin from one of its toes, and an entry in Government records by the Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal that, so far from suffering any ill effects, the leopard appeared to thrive on, and be stimulated by, the poison he absorbed via human kills.

Three interesting incidents are recorded in a Government report and I will summarize them here.

First: In response to the press appeal to sportsmen, two young British officers arrived at Rudraprayag in 1921 with the avowed object of shooting the man-eater. What reason they had for thinking that the leopard crossed from bank to bank of the Alaknanda river by the Rudraprayag suspension bridge I do not know; anyway they decided to confine their efforts to this bridge and shoot the leopard as it was crossing at night. There are towers at each end of the bridge to carry the suspending cables, so one of the young sportsmen sat on the tower on the left bank of the river, and his companion sat on the tower on the right bank.

After they had been sitting for two months on these towers, the man on the left bank saw the leopard walk out on to the bridge from the archway below him. Waiting until the leopard had got well on to the bridge, he fired, and as it dashes across, the man on the tower on the right bank emptied the six chambers of his revolver at it. Next morning blood was found on the bridge and on the hill up which the leopard had gone, and as it was thought that the wound, or wounds, would be fatal, a search was kept up for many days. The report goes on to say that for six months after it was wounded the leopard did not kill any human beings.

I was told about this incident by men who had heard the seven shots, and who had assisted in trying to recover the wounded animal. It was thought by the two sportsmen, and also by my informants, that the leopard had been hit in the back by the first bullet and possibly in the head by some of the subsequent bullets, and it was for this reason that a diligent and prolonged search had been made for it. From the particulars given me of the blood trail I was of opinion that the sportsmen were wrong in thinking that they had inflicted a body and head wound on the leopard, for the blood trail as described to me could only have been made by a foot wound, and I was very gratified to find later that my deductions were correct and that the bullet fired by the man on the tower on the left bank had only creased the pad of the leopard's left hind foot and shot away a portion of one of its toes, and that the man on the right bank had missed all his shots.

Second: After some twenty leopards had been caught and killed in traps of the drop-door type, a leopard which everyone thought was the man-eater was caught in one of these traps; and as the Hindu population were unwilling to kill it for fear the spirits of the people whom the man-eater had killed would torment them, an Indian Christian was sent for. This Christian was living in a village thirty miles away, and before he could arrive on the scene, the leopard had dug its way out of the trap, and escaped.

Third: After killing a man the leopard lay up with his kill in a small isolated patch of jungle. Next morning, when search was being made for the victim, the leopard was detected leaving the jungle. After a short chase it was seen to enter a cave, the mouth of which was promptly closed with thornbushes heaped over with big rocks. Every day a growing crowd of men visited the spot. On the fifth day, when some five hundred were assembled, a man whose name is not given but whom the report described as 'a man of influence' came, and, to quote the report, 'said scornfully "there is no leopard in this cave" and took the thorns off the cave. As he took the thorns up, the leopard suddenly rushed out of the cave and made his way safely through a crowd of some five hundred persons who had gathered there.'

These incidents took place shortly after the leopard had become a man-eater, and had the leopard been killed on the bridge, shot in the trap, or sealed up in the cave, several hundred people need not have died, and Garhwal would have been saved many years of suffering.





## *Arrival*

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**I**T WAS DURING ONE OF the intervals of Gilbert and Sullivan's Yeomen of the Guard, which was showing at the Chalet Theatre in Naini Tal in 1925, that I first had any definite news of the Rudraprayag man-eater.

I had heard casually that there was a man-eating leopard in Garhwal and had read articles in the press about the animal, but knowing that there were over four thousand licensed gun-holders in Garhwal, and host of keen sportsmen in Lansdowne, only some seventy miles from Rudraprayag, I imagined that people were falling over each other in their eagerness to shoot the leopard and that a stranger under these circumstances would not be welcome.

It was with no little surprise therefore that, as I stood at the Chalet bar that night having a drink with a friend, I heard Michael Keene— then Chief

Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces and later Governor of Assam—telling a group of men about the man-eater and trying to persuade them to go after it. His appeal, judging from the remark of one of the group, and endorsed by the others, was not received with any enthusiasm. The remark was, ‘Go after a man-eater that has killed a hundred people? Not on your life!’

Next morning I paid Michael Keene a visit and got all the particulars I wanted. He was not able to tell me exactly where the man-eater was operating, and suggested my going to Rudraprayag and getting in touch with Ibbotson. On my return home I found a letter from Ibbotson on my table.

Ibbotson—now Sir William Ibbotson, and lately Adviser to the Governor of the United Provinces—had very recently been posted to Garhwal as Deputy Commissioner, and one of his first acts had been to try to rid his district of the man-eater. It was in this connection that he had written to me.

My preparations were soon made, and by travelling via Ranikhet, Adbadri, and Karanprayag, I arrived on the evening of the tenth day at a road Inspection Bungalow near Nagrasu. When leaving Naini Tal I did not know it was necessary to arm myself with a permit to occupy this bungalow; and as the caretaker had orders not to allow anyone to occupy it unless so armed, the six Garhwalis carrying my kit, my servant, and I toiled on for another two miles down the Rudraprayag road until we found a suitable place on which to camp for the night.

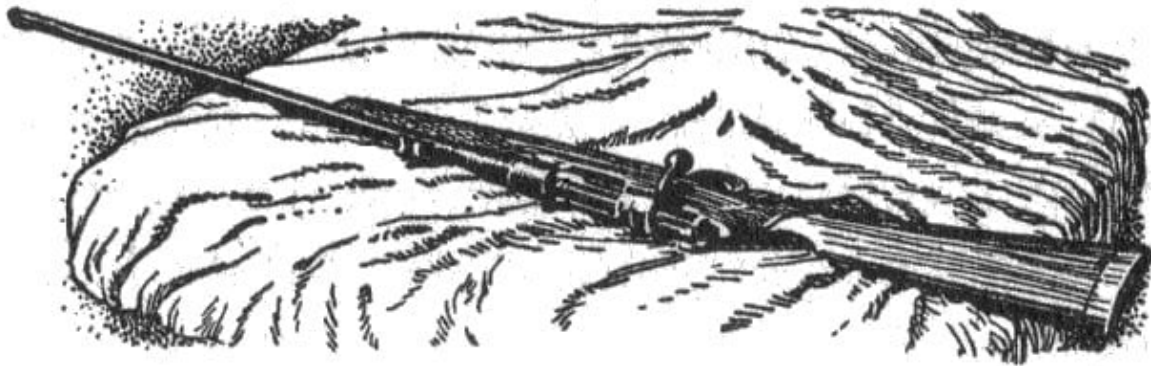
While my men busied themselves getting water and dry sticks, and my servant collected stones for a cooking-place, I picked up an axe and went to cut down thornbushes to make an enclosure to protect us during the night, for we had been warned ten miles farther up the road that we had entered the man-eater’s territory.

Shortly after the fires to cook our evening meal had been lit, a very agitated call came down to us from a village far up the mountain-side,

asking us what we were doing out in the open, and warning us that if we remained where we were one or more of us would surely be killed by the man-eater. When the good samaritan had delivered his warning, to do which he had possibly taken a great risk— for it was then dark— Madho Singh, whom you have met elsewhere, (see ‘The Chowgarh Tigers’ in Man-eaters of Kumaon.) expressed the wishes of all present when he said, ‘We will stay here, sahib, for there is sufficient oil in the lantern to keep it alight all night, and yon have your rifle.’

There was sufficient oil in the lantern to keep it alight all night, for I found it burning when I awoke in the morning, and my loaded rifle lay across my bed. But the thorn enclosure was very flimsy and we were dead tired after our ten days’ march, and if the leopard had paid us a visit that night he would have secured a very easy victim.

Next day we arrived at Rudraprayag and were given a warm welcome by the men whom Ibbotson had instructed to meet us.





## *Investigation*

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I SHALL NOT ATTEMPT TO GIVE you a day-by-day account of my activities during the ten weeks I spent at Rudraprayag, for it would be difficult after this lapse of time to write such an account and, if written, it would be boring for you to read. I shall confine myself to relating a few of my experiences, sometimes while alone and at other times in company with Ibbotson. But before doing so I should like to give you some idea of the country over which the leopard ranged for eight years, and in which I hunted him for ten weeks.

If you were to climb the hill to the east of Rudraprayag you would be able to see the greater portion of the five hundred square miles of country that the Rudraprayag man-eater ranged over. This area is divided into two more or less equal parts by the Alaknanda river, which, after passing



Karanprayag, flows south to Rudraprayag, where it is met by the Mandakini coming down from the north-west. The triangular bit of country between the two rivers is less steep than the country along the left bank of the Alaknanda, and there are consequently more villages in the former area than in the latter.

From your elevated position, the cultivated land in the distance shows up as a series of lines drawn across the face of the steep mountains.

These lines are terraced fields which vary in width from a yard to, in some cases, fifty or more yards. The village buildings, you will note, are invariably set at the upper end of the cultivated land; this is done with the object of overlooking and protecting the cultivation from stray cattle and wild animals, for except in very rare cases there are no hedges or fences round the fields. The brown and the green patches that make up most of the landscape are, respectively, grassland and forests. Some of the villages, you will observe, are entirely surrounded by grasslands, while others are entirely surrounded by forests. The whole country, as you look down on it, is rugged and rough, and is cut up by innumerable deep ravines and rock cliffs. In this area there are only two roads, one starting from Rudraprayag and going up to Kedarnath, and the other the main pilgrim road to Badrinath. Both roads, up to the time I am writing about, were narrow and rough and had never had a wheel of any kind on them. The number of human beings killed between 1918 and 1926 is shown on page below.

It would be reasonable to assume that more human beings would have been killed in villages surrounded by forests than in villages surrounded by cultivated land. Had the man-eater been a tiger this would undoubtedly have been the case, but to a man-eating leopard, which only operates at night, the presence or absence of cover makes no difference, and the only reason why there were more kills in one village than in another was due, in the one case, to lack of precautions, and in the other, to the observance of them.

I have mentioned that the man-eater was an out-sized male leopard long past his prime, but though he was old he was enormously strong. The ability

of carnivora to carry their kills to a place where they can feed undisturbed determines, to a great extent, the place they choose to do their killing. To the Rudraprayag man-eater all places were alike, for he was capable of carrying the heaviest of his human victims for distances up to— on one occasion that I know of— four miles. On the occasion I refer to the leopard killed a fully grown man in his own house and carried his victim for two miles up the steep slope of a well-wooded hill, and down the far side for another two miles through dense scrub jungle. This was done for no apparent reason, for the kill had taken place in the early hours of the night and the leopard had not been followed up until noon of the next day.

THE MAN-EATING LEOPARD OF RUDRAPRAYAG  
CASUALTY LIST (by villages), 1918-1926

*Six kills*

CHOPRA

*Five kills*

KOTHIKI, RATAURA

*Four kills*

BIJRAKOT

*Three kills*

NAKOT, GANDHARI, KOKHANDI, DADOLI, QUETHI,  
JHIRMOLI, GOLABRAI, LAMERI

*Two kills*

BAJADU, RAMPUR, MAIKOTI, CHHATOU, KOTI, MADOLA,  
RAUTA, KANDE (JOGI), BAWRUN, SARI, RANAU, PUNAR,  
TILANI, BAUNTHA, NAGRASU, GWAR, MARWARA

*One kill*

ASON, PILU, BHAUNSAI, MANGU, BAINJI, BHATWARI,  
 KHAMOLI, SWANRI, PHALSI, KANDA DHARKOT, DANGI,  
 GUNAUN, BHATGAON, BAWAL, BARSIL, BHAINSGAON,  
 NARI, SANDAR, TAMEND, KHATYANA, SEOPURI, SAN,  
 SYUND, KAMERA, DARMARI, DHAMKA, BELA, BELA-  
 KUND, SAUR, BHA1NSARI, BAJNU, QUILI, DHARKOT,  
 BHAINGAON, CHHINKA, DHUNG, KIURI, BAMAN  
 KANDA, POKHTA, THAPALGAON, BANSU, NAG,  
 BAISANI, RUDRAPRAYAG, GWAR, KALNA, BHUNKA,  
 KAMERA, SAIL, PABO, BHAINSWARA

#### ANNUAL TOTALS

1918 ...	1
1919 ...	3
1920 ...	6
1921 ...	23
1922 ...	24
1923 ...	26
1924 ...	20
1925 ...	8
1926 ...	14

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125

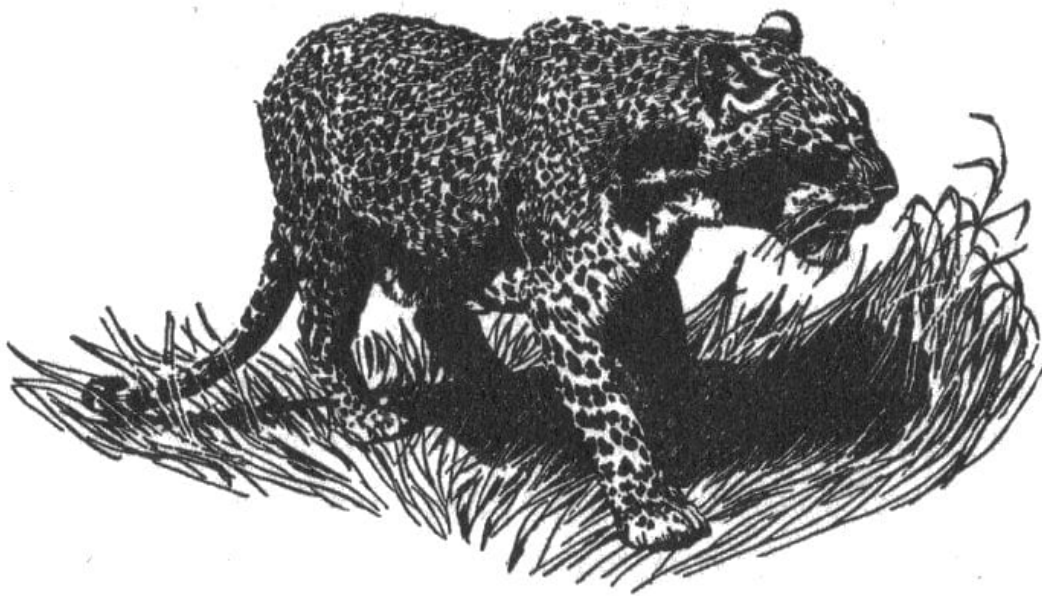
Leopards— other than man-eaters— are the most easily killed of all animals in our jungles, for they have no sense of smell.

More methods are employed in killing leopards than are employed in killing any other animal. These methods vary according to whether the

leopard is being killed for sport, or for profit. The most exciting, and the most interesting, method of killing leopards for sport is to track them down in the jungles and, when they are located, stalk and shoot them. The easiest, and the most cruel, method of killing leopards for profit is to insert a small and very highly explosive bomb in the flesh of an animal which has been killed by a leopard. Many villagers have learnt to make these bombs, and when one of them comes in contact with the leopard's teeth, it explodes and blows the leopard's jaws off. Death is instantaneous in some cases, but more often than not the unfortunate animal crawls away to die a lingering and very painful death, for the people who use the bombs have not the courage to follow the blood trail left by the leopard to dispatch it.

The tracking, locating, and stalking of leopards, besides being exciting and interesting, is comparatively easy. For leopards have tender pads and keep to footpaths and game tracks as far as possible; they are not hard to locate, for practically every bird and animal in the jungle assists the hunter; and they are easy to stalk, for, though they are blessed with very keen sight and hearing, they are handicapped by having no sense of smell. The sportsman can therefore select the line of approach that best suits him, irrespective of the direction in which the wind is blowing.

Having tracked, located, and stalked a leopard, far more pleasure is got from pressing the button of a camera than is ever got from pressing the trigger of a rifle. In the one case the leopard can be watched for hours, and there is no more graceful and interesting animal in the jungles to watch. The button of the camera can be pressed as fancy dictates to make a record which never loses its interest. In the other case a fleeting glimpse, one press of the trigger, and— if the aim has been true— the acquisition of a trophy which soon loses both its beauty and its interest.





## *The First Kill*

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**S**HORTLY BEFORE MY ARRIVAL AT Rudraprayag, Ibbotson had organized a beat which if it had been successful would have saved the lives of fifteen human beings. The beat, and the circumstances leading up to it, are worthy of record.

Twenty pilgrims toiling up the road to Badrinath arrived towards evening at a small roadside shop. After the shopkeeper had met their wants he urged them to be on their way, telling them there was only just sufficient daylight left for them to reach the pilgrim shelters four miles farther up the road, where they would get food and safe shelter. The pilgrims were unwilling to accept this advice; they said they had done a long march that day and were too tired to walk another four miles, and that all they wanted were facilities to prepare and cook their evening meal, and permission to sleep on the platform adjoining the shop. To this proposal the shopkeeper vigorously

objected. He told the pilgrims that his house was frequently visited by the man-eater, and that to sleep out in the open would be to court death.

While the argument was at its height a *sadhu* on his way from Mathura to Badrinath arrived on the scene and championed the cause of the pilgrims. He said that if the shopkeeper would give shelter to the women of the party he would sleep on the platform with the men, and if any leopard—man-eater or otherwise—dared to molest them he would take it by the mouth and tear it in half.

To this proposal the shopkeeper had perforce to agree. So while the ten women of the party took shelter in the one-roomed shop behind a locked door, the ten men lay down in a row on the platform, with the *sadhu* in the middle.

When the pilgrims on the platform awoke in the morning they found the *sadhu* missing, the blanket on which he had slept rumpled, and the sheet he had used to cover himself with partly dragged off the platform and spotted with blood. At the sound of the men's excited chattering the shopkeeper opened the door, and at a glance saw what had happened. When the sun had risen, the shopkeeper, accompanied by the men, followed the blood trail down the hill and across three terraced fields, to a low boundary wall; here, lying across the wall, with the lower portion of his body eaten away, they found the *sadhu*.

Ibbotson was staying at Rudraprayag at this time, trying to get in touch with the man-eater. There had been no kills during his stay, so he decided to beat, on spec, a very likely looking bit of cover, on the far side of the Alaknanda, which the locals suspected was used by the man-eater as a lying-up place during the hours of daylight. So while the twenty pilgrims were toiling up the road towards the little shop, the patwaris and other members of Ibbotson's staff were going round the near-by villages warning men to be ready for the beat which was to take place on the morrow.

After an early breakfast next morning Ibbotson accompanied by his wife and a friend whose name I have forgotten, and followed by some members

of his staff and two hundred beaters, crossed the Alaknanda by the suspension bridge, went up the hill on the far side for a mile or so, and took up positions for the beat.

While the beat was still in progress, word was brought by runner of the killing of the sadhu.

The beat, which proved to be a blank, was completed and a hurried council held, the upshot of which was that Ibbotson, his party, and the two hundred beaters set off up the right bank, to cross the river four miles farther up by a swing bridge, to make their way back along the left bank to the scene of the kill, while the staff dispersed over the countryside to collect as many men as possible and assemble them at the shop.

By late afternoon two thousand beaters and several additional guns had gathered, and the high rugged hill above the shop was beaten from top to bottom. If you know Ibbotson, there is no need for me to tell you that the beat was very efficiently organized, and as efficiently carried out, and the only reason why it failed in its object was that the leopard was not in that area.

When a leopard, or a tiger, leaves of his own accord a kill in the open, in an exposed spot, it is an indication that the animal has no further interest in the kill. After its feed it invariably removes itself to a distance, maybe only two or three miles, or in the case of man-eaters, maybe to a distance of ten or more miles. So it is quite possible that, while the hill was being beaten, the man-eater was peacefully slumbering ten miles away.







## *Locating the Leopard*

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**M**AN-EATING LEOPARDS ARE OF RARE occurrence, and for this reason very little is known about them.

My own experience of these animals was very limited, amounting to no more than a brief encounter with one many years previously, and though I suspected that the change-over from animal to human-and-animal diet would affect the habits of a leopard as much as it does those of a tiger, I did not know to what extent a leopard's habits would change, and meanwhile I decided to try to kill the man-eater by the methods usually employed for killing leopards.

The most common method of killing leopards is to sit up for them, either over a kill or over live bait in the form of a goat or a sheep. To carry out either one of these methods it is necessary in the one case to find a kill, and in the other to locate the quarry.

My object in going to Rudraprayag was to try to prevent further loss of human life, and I had no intention of waiting for another human kill to occur over which I could sit, therefore the obvious thing to do was to locate the man-eater and shoot it over live bait.

Here a formidable difficulty, which I hoped in time partly to overcome, presented itself. From the maps I had been supplied with I found that the man-eater was operating over an area of roughly five hundred square miles. Five hundred square miles of country anywhere would have been a considerable area in which to find and shoot any animal, and in this mountainous and rugged part of Garhwal the task of finding an animal that only operated at night appeared, at first glance, to be well-nigh impossible — until I took the Alaknanda river, which divided the area into two more or less equal parts, into consideration.

It was generally believed that the Alaknanda offered no obstacle to the man-eater and that when he found it difficult to obtain a human kill on one bank, he crossed over to the other bank, by swimming the river.

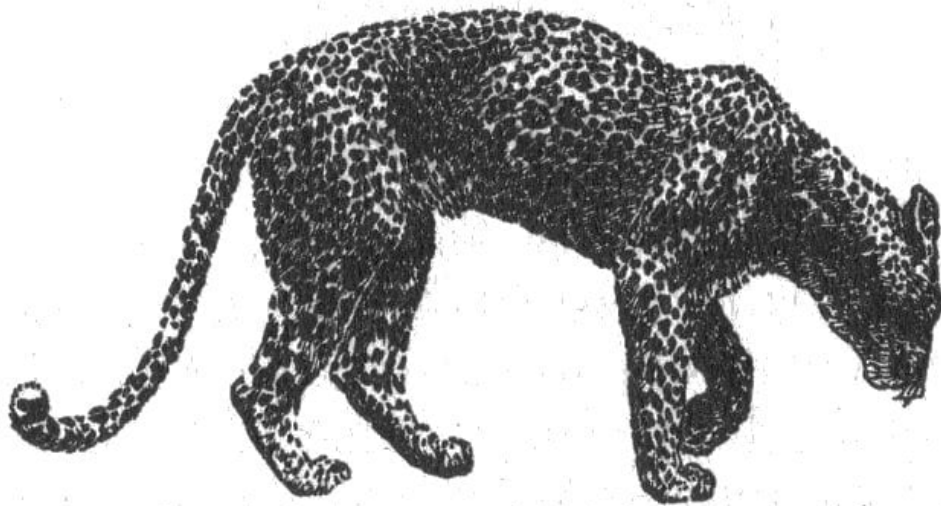
I discounted this belief. No leopard in my opinion would under any circumstances voluntarily commit itself to the swift-flowing, ice-cold waters of the Alaknanda, and I was convinced that when the man-eater crossed from one bank to the other he did so by one of the suspension bridges.

There were two suspension bridges in the area, one at Rudraprayag, and the other about twelve miles farther up the river, at Chatwapipal. Between these two bridges there was a swing bridge— the one by which Ibbotson, his party, and the two hundred men had crossed the river on the day of the beat. This swing bridge, which no animal excepting a rat could possibly have crossed, was the most fear-compelling structure of its kind that I have ever seen. The two hand-twisted grass cables, blackened by age and mouldy from the mists rising from the river, spanned some two hundred feet of foaming white water which, a hundred yards farther down, surged with a roar like thunder between two walls of rock, where a kakar, driven by wild dogs, is credited with having leapt across the Alaknanda. Between the

cables, and forming the footway, were odd bits of sticks an inch and a half to two inches in diameter set about two feet apart and loosely tied to the cables with wisps of grass. To add to the difficulty in crossing this cobweb structure, one of the cables had sagged, with the result that the sticks on which one had to place one's feet were at an angle of forty-five degrees. The first time I met this fearsome jhula I was foolish enough to ask the toll-collector, who for the payment of one pice permitted me to risk my life on it, whether the bridge was ever tested or repaired. His answer, given as he ran a speculative eye over me, that the bridge was never tested or repaired but was replaced when it broke under the weight of someone who was trying to cross it, gave me a cold feeling down my spine, a feeling that remained with me long after I had got safely to the other side.

This jhula being beyond the powers of the man-eater to cross, there remained the two suspension bridges, and I felt sure that if I could close them against the leopard I should be able to confine him to one side of the Alaknanda, and so reduce by half the area in which to look for him.

The first thing therefore was to try to find out on which bank of the river the leopard was. The last kill, of the sadhu, had taken place on the left bank of the river a few miles from the Chatwapipal suspension bridge, and I felt sure that the leopard had crossed this bridge, after abandoning his kill, for no matter what precautions the locals and the pilgrims may have taken before a kill, their precautions were redoubled immediately after one, and made it almost impossible for the leopard to secure consecutive kills in the same area. Looking at the map you will ask why, if this was so, as many as six kills have been shown against a single village. I can only answer that an effort cannot be sustained indefinitely. The houses are small and without conveniences or means of sanitation, and it would not be surprising if, hearing the man-eater was operating in a village ten, fifteen, or twenty miles away, some man, woman, or child should, at the urgent dictate of nature, open a door for a brief minute and so give the leopard the chance for which he had perhaps been waiting many nights.





## *The Second Kill*

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**N**O PHOTOGRAPHS OR OTHER MEANS by which I could identify the man-eater by his pug-marks were available, so, until I had been given an opportunity of acquiring this information for myself, I decided to treat all leopards in the vicinity of Rudraprayag as suspect, and to shoot any that gave me a chance.

The day I arrived at Rudraprayag, I purchased two goats. One of these I tied up the following evening a mile along the pilgrim road; the other I took across the Alaknanda and tied up on a path running through some heavy scrub jungle where I found the old pug-marks of a big male leopard. On visiting the goats the following morning I found the one across the river had been killed and a small portion of it eaten. The goat had unquestionably

been killed by a leopard, but had been eaten by a small animal, possibly a pine-marten.

Having received on news about the man-eater during the day, I decided to sit up over the goat, and at 3 p.m. took up my position in the branches of a small tree about fifty yards from the kill. During the three hours I sat in the tree I had no indication, from either animals or birds, that the leopard was anywhere in the vicinity, and as dusk was falling I slipped off the tree, cut the cord tethering the goat— which the leopard had made no attempt to break the previous night— and set off for the bungalow.

I have already admitted that I had very little previous experience of man-eating leopards, but I had met a few man-eating tigers, and from the time I left the tree until I reached the bungalow I took every precaution to guard against a sudden attack; and it was fortunate that I did so.

I made an early start next morning, and near the gate of the bungalow I picked up the tracks of a big male leopard. These tracks I followed back to a densely wooded ravine which crossed the path close to where the goat was lying. The goat had not been touched during the night.

The leopard that had followed me could only have been the man-eater, and for the rest of the day I walked as many miles as my legs would carry me, telling all the people in the villages I visited, and all whom I met on the roads, that the man-eater was on our side of the river, and warning them to be careful.

Nothing happened that day, but next day, just as I was finishing breakfast after a long morning spent in prospecting the jungles beyond Golabrai, a very agitated man dashed into the bungalow to tell me that a woman had been killed by the man-eater the previous night in a village on the hill above the bungalow— the same hill and almost at the exact spot from where you obtained your bird's-eye view of the five hundred square miles of country the man-eater was operating over.

Within a few minutes I collected all the things I needed— a spare rifle and a shotgun, cartridges, rope, and a length of fishing-line— and set off up

the steep hill accompanied by the villager and two of my men. It was a sultry day, and though the distance was not great— three miles at the most — the climb of four thousand feet in the hot sun was very trying and I arrived at the village in a bath of sweat.

The story of the husband of the woman who had been killed was soon told. After their evening meal, which had been eaten by the light of the fire, the woman collected the metal pots and pans that had been used and carried them to the door to wash, while the man sat down to have a smoke. On reaching the door the woman sat down on the doorstep, and as she did so the utensils clattered to the ground. There was not sufficient light for the man to see what had happened, and when he received no answer to his urgent call he dashed forward and shut and barred the door. 'Of what use', he said, 'would it have been for me to risk my life in trying to recover a dead body?' His logic was sound, though heartless; and I gathered that the grief he showed was occasioned not so much by the loss of his wife, as by the loss of that son and heir whom he had expected to see born within the next few days.

The door, where the woman had been seized, opened on to a four-foot-wide lane that ran for fifty yards between two rows of houses. On hearing the clatter of the falling pots and pans, followed by the urgent call of the man to his wife, every door in the lane had been instantaneously shut. The marks on the ground showed that the leopard had dragged the unfortunate woman the length of the lane, then killed her, and carried her down the hill for a hundred yards into a small ravine that bordered some terraced fields. Here he ate his meal, and here he left the pitiful remains.

The body lay in the ravine at one end of a narrow terraced field, at the other end of which, forty yards away, was a leafless and stunted walnut tree in whose branches a hayrick had been built, four feet from the ground and six feet tall. In this hayrick I decided to sit.

Starting from near the body, a narrow path ran down into the ravine. On this path were the pug-marks of the leopard that had killed the woman, and they were identical with the pug marks of the leopard that had followed me

two nights previously from the killed goat to the Rudraprayag bungalow. The pug-marks were of an out-sized male leopard long past his prime, with a slight defect where a bullet fired four years previously had creased the pad of his left hind paw.

I procured two stout eight-foot bamboos from the village and drove them into the ground close to the perpendicular bank that divided the field where the body was laying from the field below. To these bamboos I fixed my spare rifle and shotgun securely, tied lengths of dressed silk fishing-line to the triggers, looped the lines back over the trigger-guards, and fastened them to two stakes driven into the hillside on the far side of, and a little above, the path. If the leopard came along the path he had used the previous night there was a reasonable chance of his pulling on the lines and shooting himself; on the other hand, if he avoided them, or came by any other way, and I fired at him while he was on the kill, he would be almost certain to run into the trap which lay on his most natural line of retreat. Both the leopard, because of its protective colouring, and the body, which had been stripped of all clothing, would be invisible in the dark; so to give me an idea of the direction in which to fire, I took a slab of white rock from the ravine and put it on the edge of the field, about a foot from the near side of the body.

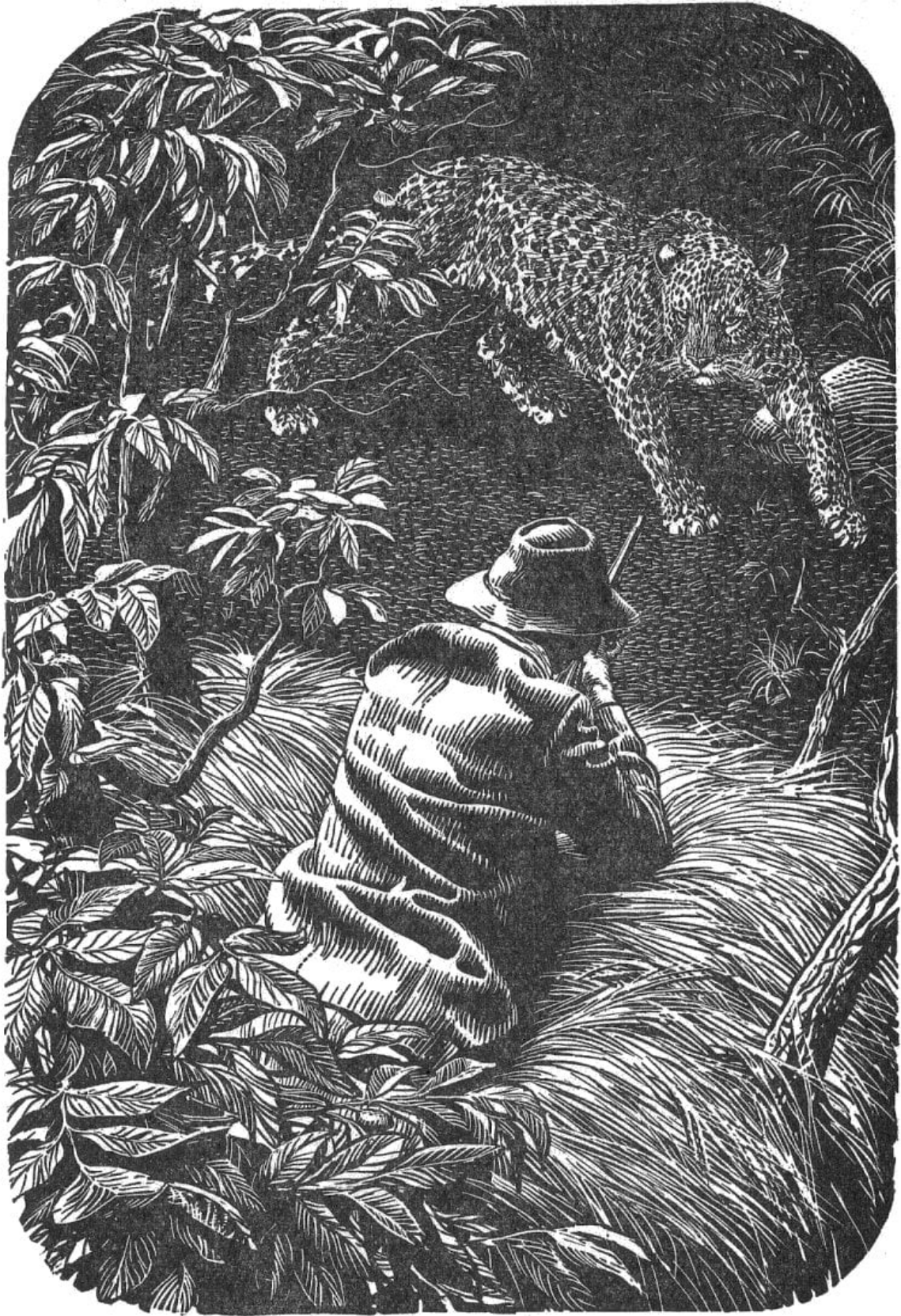
My ground arrangements completed to my satisfaction, I made myself a comfortable seat on the rick, throwing out some of the straw, and heaping some behind me and up to my waist in front. As I was facing the kill and had my back to the tree, there was little chance of the leopard seeing me, no matter at what time he came; and that he would come during the night, in spite of his reputation of not returning to his kills, I was firmly convinced. My clothes were still wet after the stiff climb, but a comparatively dry jacket kept out the chill wind; so I settled down into my soft and comfortable seat and prepared for an all-night vigil. I sent my men away, and told them to remain in the headman's house until I came for them, or until the sun was well up next morning. (I had stepped from the bank on to the rick and there was nothing to prevent the man-eater from doing the same.)



The sun was near setting, and the view of the Ganges valley, with the snowy Himalayas in the background showing bluish pink under the level rays of the setting sun, was a feast for the eyes. Almost before I realized it, daylight had faded out of the sky and night had come.

Darkness, when used in connection with night, is a relative term and has no fixed standard; what to one man would be pitch dark, to another would be dark, and to a third moderately dark. To me, having spent so much of my life in the open, the night is never dark, unless the sky is overcast with heavy clouds. I do not wish to imply that I can see as well by night as by day; but I can see quite well enough to find my way through any jungle or, for that matter, over any ground. I had placed the white stone near the body only as a precaution, for I hoped that the starlight, with the added reflection from the snowy range, would give me sufficient light to shoot by.

But my luck was out; for night had hardly fallen when there was a flash of lightning, followed by distant thunder, and in a few minutes the sky was heavily overcast. Just as the first big drops of a deluge began to fall, I heard a stone roll into the ravine, and a minute later the loose straw on the ground below me was being scratched up. The leopard had arrived; and while I sat in torrential rain with the icy-cold wind whistling through my wet clothes, he lay dry and snug in the straw below. The storm was one of the worst I have ever experienced, and while it was at its height, I saw a lantern being carried towards the village, and marvelled at the courage of the man who carried it. It was not until some hours later that I learnt that the man who so gallantly braved both the leopard and the storm had done a forced march of over thirty miles from Pauri to bring me the electric night-shooting light the Government had promised me; the arrival of this light three short hours earlier might ... But regrets are vain, and who can say that the fourteen people who died later would have had a longer span of life if the leopard had not buried his teeth in their throats? And again, even if the light had arrived in time there is no certainty that I should have killed the leopard that night.

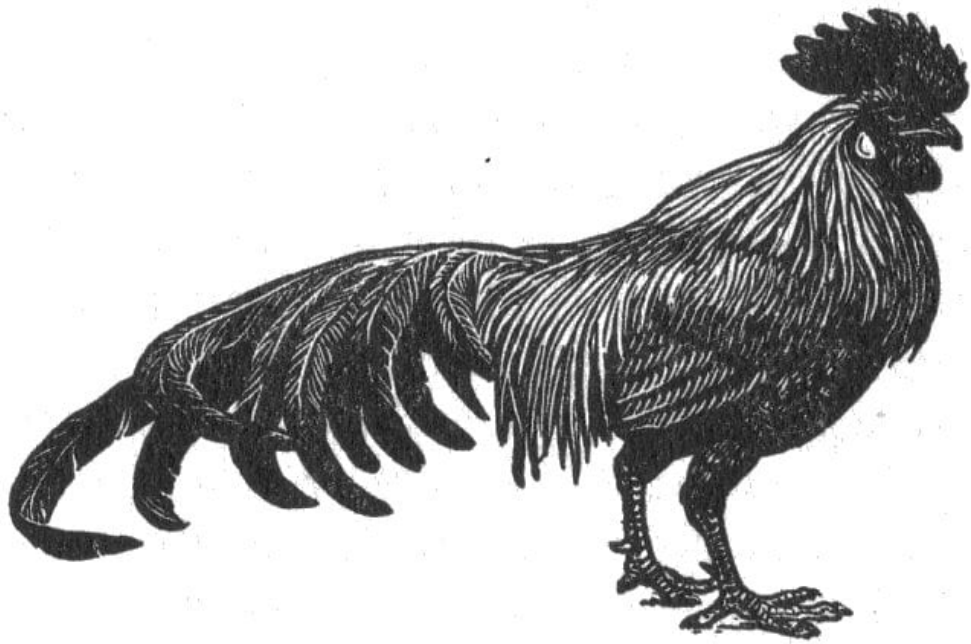


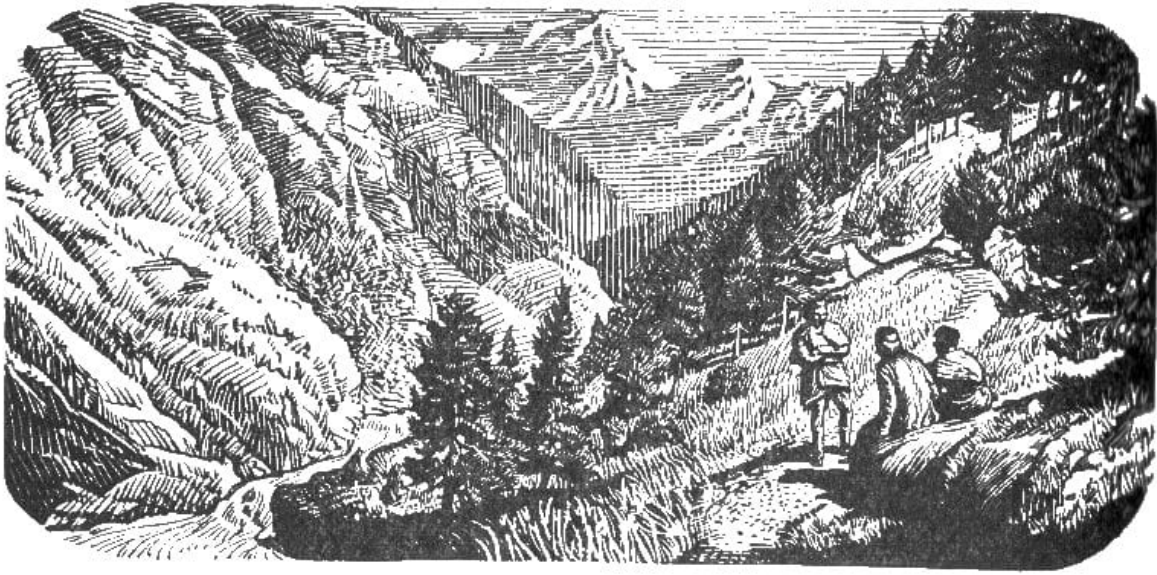
The rain was soon over— leaving me chilled to the bone— and the clouds were breaking up when the white stone was suddenly obscured, and a little later I heard the leopard eating. The night before, he had lain in the ravine and eaten from that side; so, expecting him to do the same this night, I had placed the stone on the near side of the kill. Obviously, the rain had formed little pools in the ravine, and to avoid them the leopard had taken up a new position and in doing so had obscured my mark. This was something I had not foreseen; however, knowing the habits of leopards, I knew I should not have to wait long before the stone showed up again. Ten minutes later the stone was visible, and almost immediately thereafter I heard a sound below me and saw the leopard as a light-yellowish object disappearing under the rick. His light colour could be accounted for by old age, but the sound he made when walking I could not then, nor can I now, account for; it was like the soft rustle of a woman's silk dress, and could not be explained by stubble in the field— for there was none— or by the loose straw lying about.

Waiting a suitable length of time, I raised the rifle and covered the stone, intending to fire the moment it was again obscured; but there is a limit to the time a heavy rifle can be held to the shoulder, and when the limit had been reached I lowered the rifle to ease my aching muscles. I had hardly done so when the stone for the second time disappeared from view. Three times within the next two hours the same thing happened, and in desperation, as I heard the leopard approaching the rick for the fourth time, I leant over and fired at the indistinct object below me.

The narrow terrace to which I have given the usual name of 'field' was only about two feet wide at this point, and when I examined the ground next morning [ found my bullet-hole in the centre of the two-foot-wide space with a little hair, cut from the leopard's neck, scattered round it.

I saw no more of the leopard that night, and at sunrise I collected my men and set off down the steep hill to Rudraprayag, whilst the husband and his friends carried away the woman's remains for cremation.





## *Preparations*

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**M**Y THOUGHTS AS, COLD AND STIFF, I walked down the hill to Rudraprayag from the scene of my night's failure were very bitter, for, from whatever angle it was viewed, there was no question that the fickle jade chance had played both Garhwal and myself a scurvy trick which we did not deserve.

However little I merit it, the people of our hills credit me with supernatural powers where man-eaters are concerned. News that I was on my way to try to rid Garhwal of the man-eater had preceded me, and while I was still many days' march from Rudraprayag the men I met on the roads, and those who from their fields or village homes saw me passing, greeted me with a faith in the accomplishment of my mission that was as touching as it was embarrassing, and which increased in intensity the nearer I approached my destination. Had any been there to witness my entry into Rudraprayag, he would have found it hard to believe that the man whom the populace thronged round was no hero returning from the wars, but a man, very sensible of his limitations, who greatly feared that the task he had undertaken was beyond his powers of accomplishment.

Five hundred square miles, much of which was clothed with dense scrub jungle, and all of which was rugged and mountainous, was an enormous area in which to find and shoot one particular leopard out of possibly fifty that inhabited it, and the more I saw of the grand and beautiful country the less I liked it from the viewpoint of the task I had undertaken. The populace quite naturally did not share my misgivings, to them I was one who had rid others of man-eaters and who had now come among them to rid them of the menace they had lived under for eight long years. And then, with incredible good luck, I had within a few hours of my arrival got the animal I was in pursuit of to kill one of my goats and, by staying out a little after dark, to follow me to that side of the Alaknanda where I believed it would be less difficult to deal with it than it would have been on the other side. Following on this initial success had been the kill of the unfortunate woman. I had tried to prevent the further loss of human life, and had failed, and my failure had presented me with an opportunity of shooting the leopard which otherwise I might not have got for many months.

As I had been toiling uphill behind my guide the previous day, I had weighed up my chances of killing the leopard and assessed them at two-to-one, despite the facts that the animal had in recent years earned the reputation of never returning to a kill, that it was a dark night, and that I had no aid to night shooting. The day I visited Michael Keene and told him I would go to Garhwal he had asked me if I had everything I wanted; and hearing that I only lacked a night-shooting light and would telegraph to Calcutta for one, he said the least the Government could do for me was to provide me with a light; and he promised to have the best one procurable waiting for me at Rudraprayag.

Though my disappointment was great when I found that the light had not arrived, it was mitigated by my ability to see in the dark, the ability on which I had assessed my chances at two-to-one. So much depended on the success of that night's venture, that I had armed myself with a spare rifle and shot gun, and when from my concealed position on the hayrick I viewed the scene—the short range at which I should get my shot, and the perfectly camouflaged gun-trap into which the leopard would of a certainty run if I missed or wounded him—my hopes rose high and I put my chances

of success at ten-to-one. Then had come the storm. With visibility reduced to practically nil, and without the electric light, I had failed, and my failure would in a few hours be known throughout the stricken area.

Exercise, warm water, and food have a wonderfully soothing effect on bitter thoughts, and by the time I had picked my way down the steep hillside, had a hot bath, and breakfast, I had ceased to rail at fate and was able to take a more reasonable view of my night's failure. Regret over a bullet fired into the ground was as profitless as regret over milk spilt on sand, and provided the leopard had not crossed the Alaknanda my chances of killing it had improved, for I now had the electric shooting light which the runner had braved both the leopard and the storm to bring me.

The first thing to do was to find out if the leopard had crossed the Alaknanda, and as I was firm in my conviction that the only way it could do this was by way of the suspension bridges, I set out after breakfast to glean this information. I discounted the possibility of the leopard having crossed the Chatwapipal bridge, for no matter how great the shock he had received by the discharge of my heavy rifle a few feet from his head, it was not possible that he would have covered the fourteen miles that separated the kill from the bridge in the few hours that remained between the firing of my shot and daylight, so I decided to confine my search to the Rudraprayag bridge.

There were three approaches to the bridge; one from the north, one from the south, and between these two a well-beaten footpath from the Rudraprayag bazaar. After examining these approaches very carefully I crossed the bridge and examined the Kedarnath pilgrim road for half a mile, and then the footpath on which three nights previously my goat had been killed. Satisfied that the leopard had not crossed the river, I determined to put in operation my plan for closing the two bridges at night and thus confining the leopard to my side of the river. The plan was a simple one and, given the co-operation of the caretakers of the bridges, both of whom lived on the left bank and close to the bridge abutments, was certain of success.

To close the only means of communication between the two banks of the river over a stretch of some thirty miles would appear to be a very high-handed proceeding, but actually it was not so, for no human being dared to use the bridges between sunset and sunrise owing to the curfew imposed by the leopard.

The bridges were closed by wedging thornbushes in the four-foot-wide archway in the towers carrying the steel cables from which the plank footway was suspended, and during the whole period that the bridges were closed with thorn, or were guarded by me, no human being demanded passage across them.

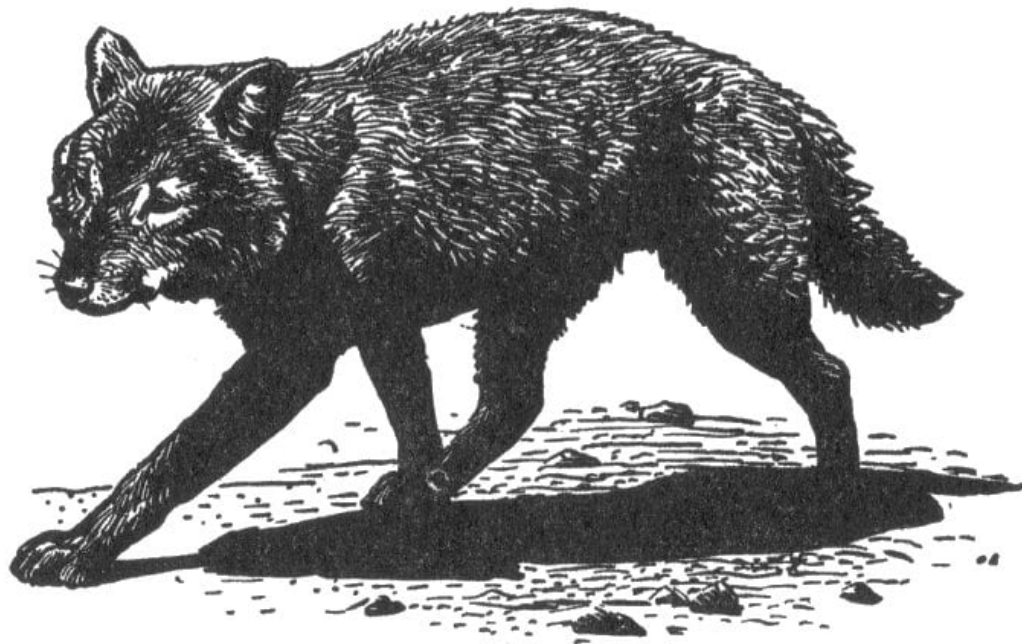
I spent in all some twenty nights on the tower on the left bank of the Rudraprayag bridge, and those nights will never be forgotten. The tower was built out on a projecting rock and was twenty feet high, and the platform on the top of it, which had been worn smooth by the wind, was about four feet wide and eight feet long. There were two means of reaching this platform, one by swarming along the cables, which ran through holes near the top of the tower and were anchored in the hillside some fifty feet from the tower, and the other by climbing up a very rickety bamboo ladder. I chose the latter way, for the cables were coated over with some black and very evil-smelling matter which clung to one's hands and permanently stained one's clothes.

The ladder— two uneven lengths of bamboo connected with thin sticks loosely held in position with string— only reached to within four feet of the platform. Standing on the top rung of the ladder and dependent for a handhold on the friction of the palms of my hands on the smooth masonry, the safe gaining of the platform was an acrobatic feat that had less appeal the oftener it was tried.

All the rivers in this part of the Himalayas flow from north to south, and in the valleys through which they flow blows a wind which changes direction with the rising and the setting of the sun. During daylight hours the wind— locally called dadu— blows from the south, and during the hours of night it blows from the north.



At the time when I used to take up my position on the platform there was usually a lull in the wind, but shortly thereafter it started blowing as a light zephyr gaining in strength as daylight faded, and amounting by midnight to a raging gale. There was no handhold on the platform and even when lying flat on my stomach to increase friction and reduce wind-pressure, there was imminent risk of being blown off on to the rocks sixty feet below, off which one would have bounced into the ice-cold Alaknanda— not that the temperature of the water would have been of any interest after a fall of sixty feet on to sharp and jagged rocks. Strangely enough, whenever I felt in fear of falling it was always the water, and never the rocks, that I thought of. Added to the discomfort of the wind, I suffered torment from a multitude of small ants, which entered my clothes and ate away patches of skin. During the twenty nights I guarded the bridge, the thornbushes were not placed in position; and in all that long period the bridge was only crossed by one living thing— a jackal.





## *Magic*

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**E**ACH EVENING WHEN I WENT TO the bridge I was accompanied by two men who carried the ladder that enabled me to climb to the platform, and which they removed after handing me my rifle.

On the second day, as we arrived at the bridge, we saw a man dressed in flowing white robes with something glinting on his head and breast. He carried a six-foot silver cross, and was approaching the bridge from the direction of Kedarnath. On reaching the bridge the man knelt down and,

holding the cross in front of him, bowed his head. After remaining in this position for a little while he raised the cross high, rose to his feet, took a few steps forward, and again knelt down and bowed his head. This he continued to do at short intervals all the way across the long bridge.

As he passed me the man raised his hand in salutation, but since he appeared to be deep in prayer I did not speak to him. The glints I had seen on his head-dress and breast were, I perceived, silver crosses.

My men had been as interested in this strange apparition as I had been, and watching him climb the steep footpath to the Rudraprayag bazaar, they asked me what manner of man he was, and from what country he had come. That he was a Christian was apparent, and as I had not heard him speak I assumed from his long hair, jet-black luxuriant beard, and what I could see of his features, that he was a man from Northern India.

The following morning, when with the help of the ladder I had climbed down from the tower and was proceeding to the Inspection Bungalow, where I passed that portion of the daylight hours that I did not spend in visiting near and distant villages in search of news of the man-eater, I saw the tall white-robed figure standing on a great slab of rock near the road, surveying the river. At my approach he left the rock and greeted me, and when I asked him what had brought him to these parts he said he had come — from a distant land— to free the people of Garhwal from the evil spirit that was tormenting them. When I asked how he proposed accomplishing this feat, he said he would make an effigy of a tiger and after he had, by prayer, induced the evil spirit to enter it, he would set the effigy afloat on the Ganges and the river would convey it down to the sea from where it could not return, and where it would do no farther harm to human beings.

However much I doubted the man's ability to accomplish the task he had set himself, I could not help admiring his faith and his industry. He arrived each morning before I left the tower, and I found him still at work when I returned in the evening, labouring with split bamboos, string, paper, and cheap coloured cloth on his 'tiger'. When the effigy was nearing completion a heavy rainstorm one night made the whole structure come

unstuck, but, nothing daunted, he cheerfully started on it again next morning, singing as he worked.

Came at last the great day when the ‘tiger’— about the size of a horse, and resembling no known animal— was fashioned to his satisfaction.

Who is there among our hill-folk who does not whole-heartedly enjoy taking part in a tamasha? When the effigy, tied to a long pole, was carried down a steep path to a small sandy beach, it had an escort of over a hundred men, many of whom were beating gongs and blowing long trumpets.

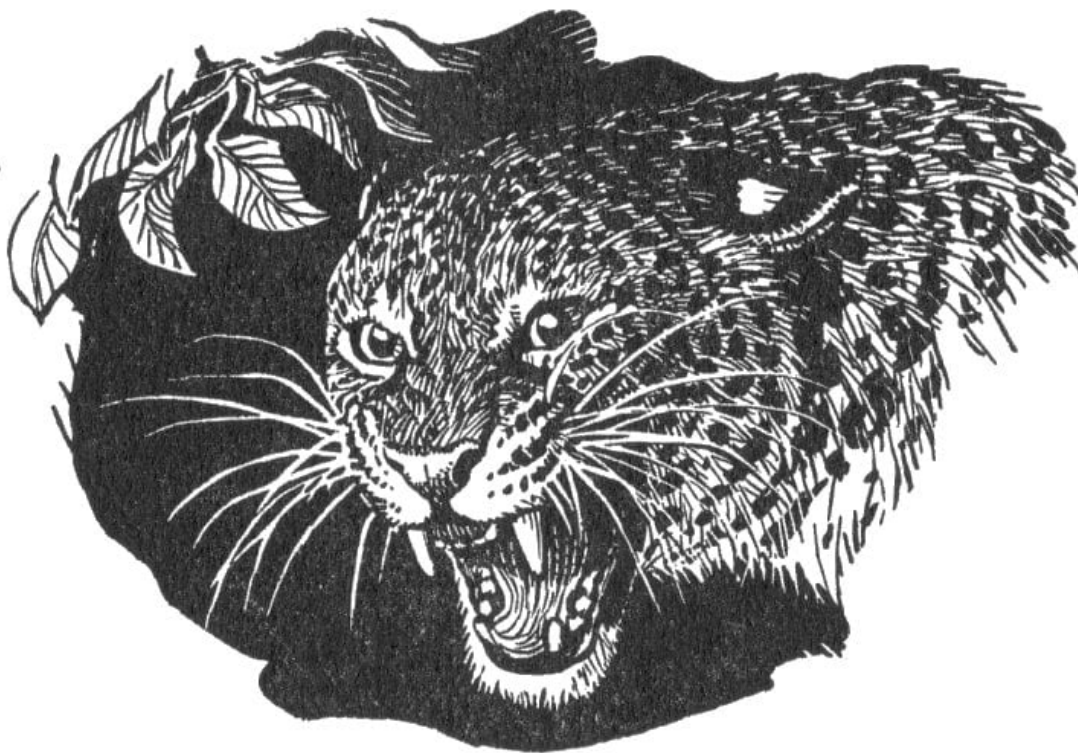
At the river’s edge the effigy was unlashd from the pole. The white-robed man, with his silver crosses on headgear and breast and his six-foot cross in his hands, knelt on the sand, and with earnest prayer induced the evil spirit to enter his handiwork, and then the effigy, with a crash of gongs and blare of trumpets, was consigned to the Ganges, and speeded on its way to the sea by a liberal offering of sweets and flowers.

Next morning the familiar figure was absent from the rock, and when I asked some men who were on their way to have an early dip in the river where my friend of the flowing robes had come from, and where he had gone, they answered, ‘Who can tell whence a holy man has come, and who dare question whither he has departed?’

These men with sandalwood-paste caste-marks on their foreheads, who spoke of the man as ‘holy’, and all those others who had taken part in the launching ceremony, were Hindus.

In India, where there are no passports or identity discs, and where religion counts for so much— except among those few who have crossed the ‘black water’— I believe that a man wearing a saffron robe, or carrying a beggar’s bowl, or with silver crosses on his headgear and chest, could walk from the Khyber Pass to Cape Comorin without once being questioned about his destination, or the object of his journey.





## *A Near Escape*

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**W**HILE I WAS STILL GUARDING THE bridge, Ibbotson and his wife Jean arrived from Pauri, and as the accommodation in the Inspection Bungalow was very limited I moved out to make room for them, and set up my forty-pound tent on the hill on the far side of the pilgrim road.

A tent afforded little protection against an animal that had left his claw-marks on every door and window for miles round, so I helped my men to put a thorn fence round the ground we intended to camp on. Overhanging this plot of ground was a giant prickly-pear-tree, and as its branches interfered with the erection of the tent I told the men to cut it down. When the tree had been partly cut through I changed my mind, for I saw that I should be without shade during the heat of the day, so instead of felling the

tree I told the men to lop the overhanging branches. This tree, which was leaning over the camp at an angle of forty-five degrees, was on the far side of the fence.

There were eight of us in the little camp, and when we had eaten our evening meal I wedged a thornbush securely into the opening in the fence we had entered by, and as I did so I noticed that it would be very easy for the man-eater to climb the tree and drop down on our side of the fence. However, it was too late then to do anything about it, and if the leopard left us alone for that one night, the tree could be cut down and removed in the morning.

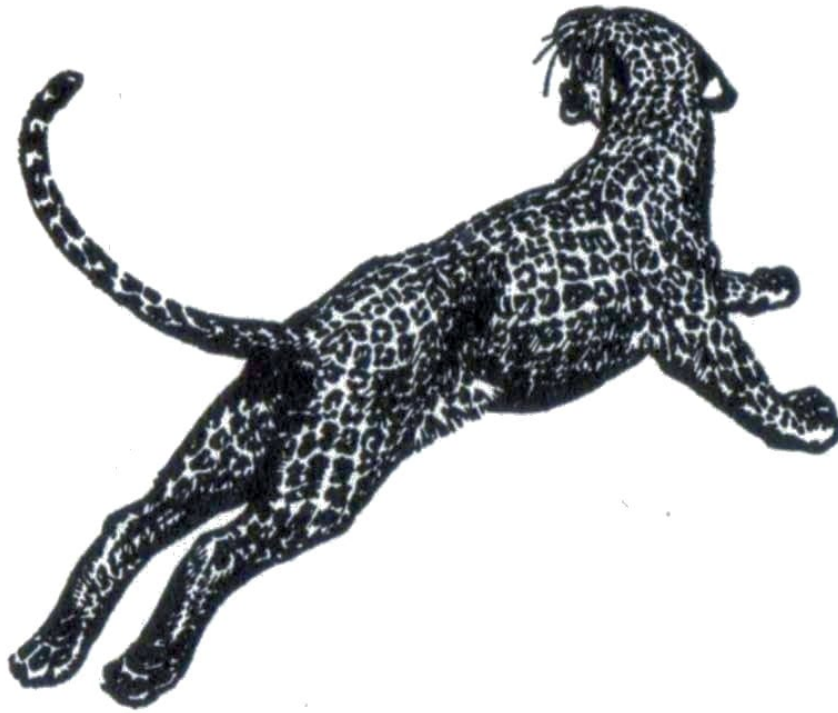
I had no tents for my men, and had intended that they should sleep with Ibbotson's men in the outbuildings of the Inspection Bungalow, but this they had refused to do, asserting that there was no more danger for them than there was for me in the open tent. My cook—who was, I discovered, a very noisy sleeper—was lying next to and about a yard from me, and beyond him, packed like sardines in the little enclosure, were the six Garhwalis I had brought from Naini Tal.

The weak spot in our defence was the tree, and I went to sleep thinking of it.

It was a brilliant moonlit night, and round about midnight I was suddenly awakened by hearing the leopard climbing the tree. Picking up the riffle, which was lying ready loaded on the bed, I swung my legs off the bed and had just slipped my feet into my slippers—to avoid the thorns which were scattered all round—when there was an ominous crack from the partly-cut-through tree, followed by a yell from the cook of 'Bagh! Bagh!' In one jump I was outside the tent and, swinging round, was just too late to get the rifle to bear on the leopard as it sprang up the bank on to a terraced field. Pulling the bush out of the gap I dashed up to the field which was about forty yards in width and bare of crops, and as I stood scanning the hillside dotted over with thornbushes and a few big rocks, the alarm call of a jackal far up the hill informed me that the leopard had gone beyond my reach.

The cook informed me later that he had been lying on his back— a fact of which I had long been aware— and hearing the tree crack he had opened his eyes and looked straight into the leopard's face just as it was preparing to jump down.

The tree was cut down next day and the fence strengthened, and though we stayed in that camp for several weeks our slumbers were not again disturbed.







## *The Gin-Trap*

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FROM REPORTS RECEIVED FROM NEARBY villages where unsuccessful attempts had been made to break into houses, and from the pug-marks I had seen on the roads, I knew that the man-eater was still in the vicinity and a few days after the arrival of the Ibbotsons, news was brought that a cow had been killed in a village two miles from Rudraprayag, and about half a mile from the village where I had sat on the hayrick in a walnut tree.

Arrived at the village we found that a leopard had broken down the door of a one-roomed house and had killed and dragged to the door one of the several cows that were in it, and not being able to drag it through the door, had left it on the threshold after eating a good meal.

The house was in the heart of the village, and on prospecting round, we found that by making a hole in the wall of a house a few yards away we could overlook the kill.

The owner of this house, who was also the owner of the dead cow, was only too willing to fall in with our plans, and as evening closed in we

locked ourselves very securely into the room, and after eating our sandwiches and drinking the tea we had brought with us, we mounted guard in turns over the hole in the wall throughout the long night without either seeing or hearing anything of the leopard.

When we emerged in the morning the villagers took us round the village, which was of considerable size, and showed us the claw-marks on doors and windows made by the man-eater in the course of years, in his attempts to get at the inmates. One door in particular had more and deeper claw-marks than any other—it was the door the leopard had forced to enter the room in which the forty goats and the boy had been secured. A day or two later another cow was reported to have been killed in a small village on the hill a few hundred yards from the bungalow. Here again we found that the cow had been killed inside a house, dragged as far as the door, and partly eaten. Facing the door, and distant from it about ten yards, was a newly built hayrick, sixteen feet tall and built on a wooden platform two feet above ground.

News of the kill was brought to us early in the morning, so we had the whole day before us, and the *machan* we built by evening was I am sure not only the most effective, but also the most artistic, that has ever been constructed for a similar purpose.

To start with, the rick was dismantled, and a scaffolding of poles was set round the platform. With these poles to support it, a second, and smaller, platform was built four feet above the lower one. Two-inch-mesh wire-netting was then wound round the whole structure, leaving only the space bare between the lower platform and the ground. Wisps of straw were then looped into the meshes of the netting, and a little straw was spread round the rick and under the platform, just as it had been before we started work. One of the joint owners of the hayrick, who had been absent from the village for a day or two and who returned just as we had finished our task, would not believe that the rick had been disturbed until he felt it all round, and had been shown the second rick we had built with the spare hay in an adjoining field.

As the sun was setting we crawled through the hole we had left in and entered the machan, securely closing the entrance behind us. Ibbotson is a little shorter than me, so he took the upper platform, and when we had made ourselves comfortable we each made a small hole in the straw to shoot through. As it would not be possible for us to communicate with each other once the leopard arrived, we agreed that whoever saw it first was to fire. It was a bright moonlit night, so there was no need for either of us to use the electric light.

Sounds in the village quietened down after the evening meal had been eaten, and at about 10 p.m. I heard the leopard coming down the hill behind us. On arriving at the rick it paused for a few minutes and then started to crawl under the platform I was sitting on. Immediately below me, and with only the thickness of a plank between my seat and his head, he paused for a long minute and then started to crawl forward; and just as I was expecting him to emerge from under the platform and give me an easy shot at a range of three or four feet, there was a loud creak in the platform above me. The leopard dashed out to the right, where I could not see him, and went up the hill. The creaking of the planks at the critical moment had resulted from Ibbotson changing his position to relieve a very painful cramp in both legs. After the fright he had got, the leopard abandoned the kill and did not return that night, or the next night.

Two nights later another cow was killed a few hundred yards above the Rudraprayag bazaar.

The owner of this cow lived alone in an isolated house which contained only one room, a room which was divided by a rough partition made of odd bits of plank into a kitchen and living-room. Sometime during the night a noise in the kitchen—the door of which he had forgotten to shut—awakened the man, and a little later, in the dim moonlight which the open door was admitting, he saw the leopard through the wide chinks in the partition, trying to tear one of the planks out.

For a long time the man lay and sweated, while the leopard tried plank after plank. Eventually, being unable to find a weak place in the partition,

the leopard left the kitchen, and killed the man's cow; which was tethered in a grass lean-to against the side of the house. After killing the cow the leopard broke the rope by which it was tethered, dragged it a short distance from the lean-to, and left it out in the open after partaking of a good meal.

On the very edge of the hill, and about twenty yards from where the dead cow was lying, there was a fair-sized tree, in the upper branches of which a hayrick had been built; on this natural machan— from which there was a sheer drop of several hundred feet into the valley below— Ibbotson and I decided to sit.

To assist in killing the man-eater, the Government a few days previously had sent us a gin-trap. This trap, which was five feet long and weighed eighty pounds, was the most fearsome thing of its kind I have ever seen. Its jaws, armed with sharp teeth three inches long, had a spread of twenty-four inches, and were actuated by two powerful springs, which needed two men to compress.

When leaving the kill the leopard had followed a footpath across a field about forty yards wide, up a three-foot bank, and across another field bordered by a densely scrub-covered hill. At this three-foot step from the upper to the lower field, we set the trap, and to ensure the leopard stepping on to it we planted a few thorn twigs on either side of the path. To one of the trap was attached a short length of half-inch-thick chain, terminating in a ring three inches in diameter; through this ring we drove a stout peg, chaining the trap to the ground.

When these arrangements had been completed, Jean Ibbotson returned to the bungalow with our men, and Ibbotson and I climbed up to the hayrick. After tying a stick in front of us and looping a little hay over it, to act as a screen, we made ourselves comfortable, and waited for the leopard, which we felt sure would not escape us on this occasion.

As evening closed in heavy clouds spread over the sky, and as the moon was not due to rise until 9 p.m., we had of necessity to depend on the electric light for the accuracy of our shooting until then. This light was a

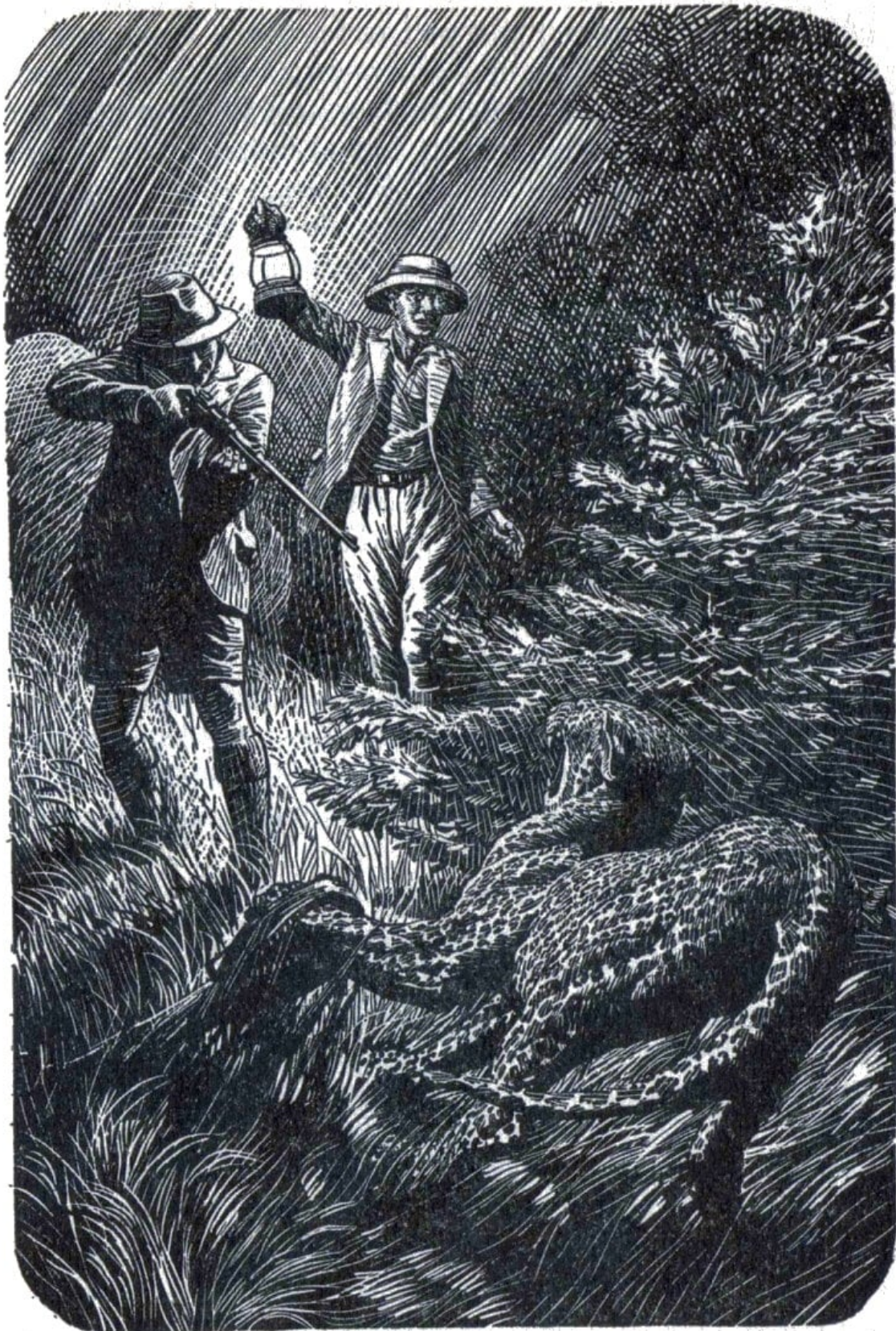
heavy and cumbersome affair, and as Ibbotson insisted on my taking the shot, I attached it to my rifle with some little difficulty.

An hour after dark a succession of angry roars apprised us of the fact that the leopard was in the trap. Switching on the electric light, I saw the leopard rearing up with the trap dangling from his forelegs, and taking a hurried shot, my .450 bullet struck a link in the chain and severed it.

Freed from the peg the leopard went along the field in a series of great leaps, carrying the trap in front of him, followed up by the bullet from my left barrel, and two lethal bullets from Ibbotson's shot gun, all of which missed him. In trying to reload my rifle I displaced some part of the light, after which it refused to function.

Hearing the roars of the leopard and our four shots, the people in Rudraprayag bazaar, and in nearby villages, swarmed out of their houses carrying lanterns and pinetorches, and converged from all sides on the isolated house. Shouting to them to keep clear was of no avail, for they were making so much noise that they could not hear us; so while I climbed down the tree, taking my rifle with me— a hazardous proceeding in the dark— Ibbotson lit and pumped up the petrol lamp we had taken into the *machan* with us. Letting the lamp down to me on the end of a length of rope, Ibbotson joined me on the ground, and together we went in the direction the leopard had taken. Halfway along the field there was a hump caused by an outcrop of rock; this hump we approached, with Ibbotson holding the heavy lamp high above his head, while I walked by his side with rifle to shoulder. Beyond the hump was a little depression, and crouching down in this depression and facing us and growling, was the leopard. Within a few minutes of my bullet crashing into his head, we were surrounded by an excited crowd, who literally danced with joy round their long-dreaded enemy.





The animal that lay dead before me was an out-sized male leopard, who the previous night had tried to tear down a partition to get at a human being, and who had been shot in an area in which dozens of human beings had been killed, all good and sufficient reasons for assuming that he was the man-eater. But I could not make myself believe that he was the same animal I had seen the night I sat over the body of the woman. True, it had been a dark night and I had only vaguely seen the outline of the leopard; even so, I was convinced that the animal that was now being lashed to a pole by willing hands was not the man-eater.

With the Ibbotsons leading the way, followed by the men carrying the leopard and a crowd of several hundred men, we set off via the bazaar for the bungalow.

As I stumbled down the hill in the wake of the procession— the only one in all that throng who did not believe that the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag was dead— my thoughts went back to an occurrence that had taken place not far from our winter home when I was a small boy, and which I saw recounted many years later in a book entitled *Brave Deeds*, or perhaps it was *Bravest Deeds*. The occurrence concerned two men: Smeaton of the Indian Civil Service and Braidwood of the Forest Department. One dark stormy night, in pre-railway days, these two men were travelling in a dak-gharry from Moradabad to Kaladhungi, and on going round a bend in the road they ran into a rogue elephant. In killing the driver and the two horses, the elephant overturned the gharry. Braidwood had a rifle, and while he got it out of its case, put it together, and loaded it, Smeaton climbed on to the gharry and released the one unbroken lamp from its socket. Then Smeaton, holding the oil lamp which only gave a glimmer of light over his head, advanced up to the elephant and shone the light on his forehead, to enable Braidwood to get in a killing shot. Admittedly there was a great difference between a rogue elephant and a leopard; even so, there are few who would care to walk up to a pain-maddened leopard— which we later found had practically torn its paw free and was only held by a thin strip of skin— holding a lamp above his head and depending for safety on a companion's bullet.



For the first night in many years every house in the bazaar was open, with women and children standing in the doorways. Progress was slow, for every few yards the leopard was put down to let the children cluster round and get a better view of it. At the farther end of the long street our escort left us, and the leopard was carried in triumph to the Bungalow by our men.

Returning to the bungalow after a wash at my camp, the Ibbotsons and I, both during and long after it, put forward our arguments for and against the dead leopard being the man-eater. Eventually, without either side convincing the other, we decided that as Ibbotson had to get back to his work at Pauri, and I was tired out after my long stay at Rudraprayag, we would spend the next day in skinning the leopard and drying the skin, and on the day after would break camp and make for Pauri.

From early morning to late evening relays of men kept coming in from near and distant villages to see the leopard, and as most of these men asserted that they recognized the animal as the man-eater, the conviction of the Ibbotsons, that they were right and I was wrong, grew. Two concessions at my request Ibbotson made: he added his warning to the people to mind, not to relax precautions against the man-eater, and he refrained from telegraphing to tell the Government that we had shot the man-eater.

We went early to bed that night, for we were to start at daybreak next morning. I was up while it was still dark and was having chota hazri when I heard voices on the road. As this was very unusual, I called out to ask what men were doing on the road at that hour. On seeing me, four men climbed up the path to my camp, and informed me they had been sent by the *patwari* to tell me that a woman had been killed by the man-eater on the far side of the river, about a mile from the Chatwapipal bridge.







## *The Hunters Hunted*

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**I**BBOTSON WAS JUST UNBOLTING THE door to admit his man with early tea when I arrived, and after he had countermanded his move to Pauri we sat on Jean's bed with a large-scale map between us, drinking tea and discussing our plans.

Ibbotson's work at his headquarters at Pauri was pressing, and at most he could only spare two more days and nights. I had telegraphed to Naini Tal the previous day to say I was returning home via Pauri and Kotdwara; this telegram I decided to cancel, and instead of going by rail, I would return on foot the way I had come. These details settled, and the village where the woman had been killed found on the map, I returned to camp to tell my men of our change of plans, and to instruct them to pack up and follow us, accompanied by the four men who had brought news of the kill.

Jean was to remain at Rudraprayag, so after breakfast Ibbotson and I set off on two of his horses, a Gulf Arab and an English mare, two of the most surefooted animals I have ever had the good fortune to ride.

We took our rifles, a blue-flame stove, a petrol-lamp, and some provisions with us, and were accompanied by one of Ibbotson's syces on a borrowed horse, carrying food for our horses.

We left the horses at the Chatwapipal bridge. This bridge had not been closed the night we shot the leopard, with the result that the man-eater had got across the river and secured a kill at the first village he visited.

A guide was waiting for us at the bridge, and he took us up a very steep ridge and along a grassy hillside, and then down into a deep and densely wooded ravine with a small stream flowing through it. Here we found the *patwari* and some twenty men guarding the kill.

The kill was a very robust and fair girl, some eighteen or twenty years of age. She was lying on her face with her hands by her sides. Every vestige of clothing had been stripped from her, and she had been licked by the leopard from the soles of her feet to her neck, in which were four great teeth-marks; only a few pounds of flesh had been eaten from the upper portion of her body, and a few pounds from the lower portion.

The drums we had heard as we came up the hill were being beaten by the men who were guarding the kill, and as it was then about 2 p.m. and there was no chance of the leopard being anywhere in the vicinity, we went up to the village to brew ourselves some tea, taking the *patwari* and the guard with us.

After tea we went and had a look at the house where the girl had been killed. It was a stone-built house, consisting of one room, situated in the midst of terraced fields some two or three acres in extent, and it was occupied by the girl, her husband, and their six-month-old child.

Two days previous to the kill, the husband had gone to Pauri to give evidence in a land dispute case, and had left his father in charge of the house. On the night of the kill, after the girl and her father-in-law had partaken of their evening meal and it was getting near time to retire for the night, the girl, who had been nursing her child, handed it over to her father-in-law, unlatched the door, and stepped outside to squat down— I have

already mentioned that there are no sanitary conveniences in the houses of our hill-folk.

When the child was transferred from the mother to the grandfather, it started crying, so even if there had been any sound from outside— and I am sure there was none— he would not have heard it. It was a dark night. After waiting for a few minutes the man called to the girl; and receiving no answer he called again. Then he got up and hurriedly closed and latched the door.

Rain had fallen earlier in the evening and it was easy to reconstruct the scene. Shortly after the rain had stopped, the leopard, coming from the direction of the village, had crouched down behind a rock in the field, about thirty yards to the left front of the door. Here it had lain for some time— possibly listening to the man and the girl talking. When the girl opened the door she squatted down on its right-hand side, partly turning her back on the leopard, who had crept round the far side of the rock, covered the twenty yards separating him from the corner of the house with belly to ground and, creeping along close to the wall of the house, had caught the girl from behind, and dragged her to the rock. Here, when the girl was dead, or possibly when the man called out in alarm, the leopard had picked her up and, holding her high, so that no mark of hand or foot showed on the soft newly ploughed ground, had carried her across one field, down a three-foot bank, and across another field which ended in a twelve-foot drop on to a well-used footpath. Down this drop the leopard had sprung with the girl—who weighed about eleven stone— in his mouth, and some idea of his strength will be realized from the fact that when he landed on the footpath he did not let any portion of her body come in contact with the ground.

Crossing the footpath he had gone straight down the hill for half a mile, to the spot where he had undressed the girl. After eating a little of her, he had left her lying in a little glade of emerald-green grass, under the shade of a tree roofed over with dense creepers.

At about four o'clock we went down to sit over the kill, taking the petrol-lamp and night-shooting light with us.

It was reasonable to assume that the leopard had heard the noise the villagers made when searching for the girl, and later when guarding the body, and that if it returned to the kill it would do so with great caution; so we decided not to sit near the kill, and selected a tree about sixty yards away on the hill overlooking the glade.

This tree, a stunted oak, was growing out of the hill at almost a right angle, and after we had hidden the petrol-lamp in a little hollow and covered it over with pine-needles, Ibbotson took his seat in a fork of the tree from where he had a clear view of the kill, while I sat on the trunk with my back to him and facing the hill; Ibbotson was to take the shot, while I saw to our safety. As the shooting light was not functioning—possibly because the battery had faded out—our plan was to sit up as long as Ibbotson could see to shoot and then, with the help of the petrol-lamp, get back to the village where we hoped to find that our men had arrived from Rudraprayag.

We had not had time to prospect the ground, but the villagers had informed us that there was heavy jungle to the east of the kill, to which they felt sure the leopard had retired when they drove it off. If the leopard came from this direction, Ibbotson would see it long before it got to the glade and would get an easy shot, for his rifle was fitted with a telescopic sight which not only made for accurate shooting, but which also gave us an extra half-hour, as we had found from tests. When a minute of daylight more or less may make the difference between success and failure, this modification of the light factor is very important.

The sun was setting behind the high hills to the west, and we had been in shadow for some minutes when a *kakar* dashed down the hill, barking, from the direction in which we had been told there was heavy jungle. On the shoulder of the hill the animal pulled up, and after barking in one spot for some time went away on the far side, and the sound dies away in the distance.

The *kakar* had undoubtedly been alarmed by a leopard, and though it was quite possible that there were other leopards in that area, my hopes had

been raised, and when I looked round at Ibbotson I saw that he too was keyed up, and that he had both hands on his rifle.

Light was beginning to fade, but was good enough to shoot by even without the aid of the telescopic sight, when a pine-cone dislodged from behind some low bushes thirty yards above us came rolling down the hill and struck the tree close to my feet. The leopard had arrived and, possibly suspecting danger, had taken a line that would enable him to prospect, from a safe place on the hill all the ground in the vicinity of his kill. Unfortunately, in so doing he had got our tree in a direct line with the kill, and though I, who was showing no outline, might escape observation, he would be certain to see Ibbotson, who was sitting in a fork of the tree.

When sufficient light for me to shoot by had long since gone, and Ibbotson's telescopic sight was no longer of any use to him, we heard the leopard coming stealthily down towards the tree. It was then time to take action, so I asked Ibbotson to take my place, while I retrieved the lamp. This lamp was of German make and was called a petromax. It gave a brilliant light but, with its long body and longer handle, was not designed to be used as a lantern in a jungle.

I am a little taller than Ibbotson, and suggested that I should carry the lamp, but Ibbotson said he could manage all right, and, moreover, that he would rather depend on my rifle than his own. So we set off, Ibbotson leading and I following with both hands on my rifle.

Fifty yards from the tree, while climbing over a rock, Ibbotson slipped, the base of the lamp came in violent contact with the rock, and the mantle fell in dust to the bottom of the lamp. The streak of blue flame directed from the nozzle on to the petrol reservoir gave sufficient light for us to see where to put our feet, but the question was how long we should have even this much light. Ibbotson was of the opinion that he could carry the lamp for three minutes before it burst. Three minutes, in which to do a stiff climb of half a mile, over ground on which it was necessary to change direction every few steps to avoid huge rocks and thornbushes, and possibly followed

— and actually followed as we found later— by a man-eater, was a terrifying prospect.

There are events in one's life which, no matter how remote, never fade from memory; the climb up that hill in the dark was for me one of them. When we eventually reached the footpath our troubles were not ended, for the path was a series of buffalo wallows, and we did not know where our men were. Alternately slipping on wet ground and stumbling over unseen rocks, we at last came to some stone steps which took off from the path and went up to the right. Climbing these steps we found a small courtyard, on the far side of which was a door. We had heard the gurgling of a hookah as we came up the steps, so I kicked the door and shouted to the inmates to open. As no answer came, I took out a box of matches and shook it, crying that if the door was not opened in a minute I would set the thatch alight. On this an agitated voice came from inside the house, begging me not to set the house on fire, and saying that the door was being opened— a minute later first the inner door and then the outer door were opened, and in two strides Ibbotson and I were in the house, slamming the inner door, and putting our backs to it.

There were some twelve or fourteen men, women, and children of all ages in the room. When the men had regained their wits after the unceremonious entry, they begged us to forgive them for not having opened the doors sooner, adding that they and their families had lived so long in terror of the man-eater that their courage had gone. Not knowing what form the man-eater might take, they suspected every sound they heard at night. In their fear they had our full sympathy, for from the time Ibbotson had slipped and broken the mantle, and a few minutes later had extinguished the red-hot lamp to prevent it bursting, I had been convinced that one, and possibly both, of us would not live to reach the village.

We were told that our men had arrived about sundown, and that they had been housed in a block of buildings farther along the hill. The two able-bodied men in the room offered to show us the way, but as we knew it would be murder to let them return to their homes alone, we declined their offer— which had been made with the full realization of the risk it would

entail— and asked if they could provide us with a light of some kind. After rummaging about in a corner of the room, an old and decrepit lantern with a cracked globe was produced, and when vigorous shaking had revealed that it contained a few drops of oil, it was lit, and with the combined good wishes of the inmates we left the house— the two doors being shut and bolted on our heels.

More buffalo wallows and more sunken rocks, but with the glimmer of light to help us we made good progress and, finding the second lot of steps we had been instructed to climb, we mounted them and found ourselves in a long courtyard facing a row of double-storied buildings extending to the right and to the left, every door of which was fast shut, and not a glimmer of light showing anywhere.

When we called a door was opened, and by climbing a short flight of stone steps we gained the veranda of the upper story, and found the two adjoining rooms which had been placed at the disposal of our men and ourselves. While the men were relieving us of the lamp and our rifles, a dog arrived from nowhere. He was just a friendly village pye, and after sniffing round our legs and wagging his tail, he went towards the steps up which we had just come. The next second, with a scream of fear followed by hysterical barking, he backed towards us with all his hair on end.

The lantern we had been lent had died on us as we reached the courtyard, but our men had procured its twin brother. Though Ibbotson held it at all angles while I hurriedly reloaded my rifle, he could not get its light to illuminate the ground eight feet below.

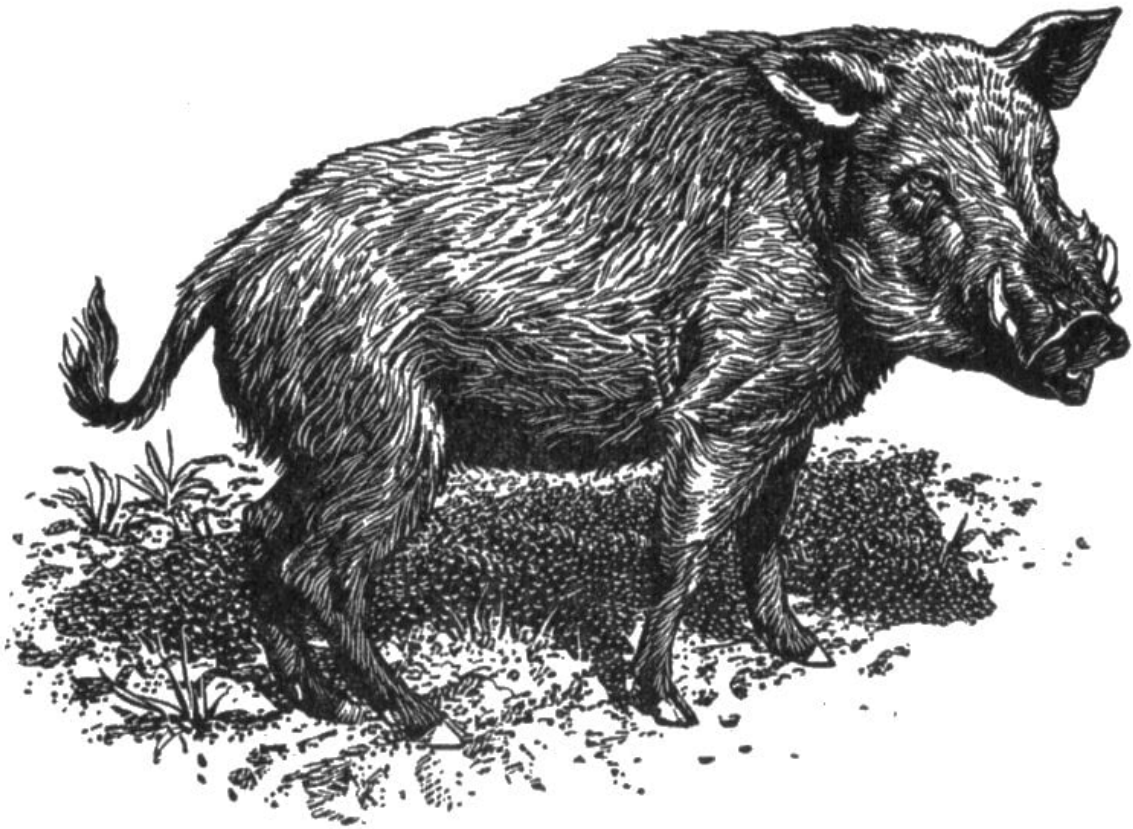
By watching the dog it was possible to follow the movements of the leopard. When the leopard had crossed the yard and gone down the steps leading to the footpath, the dog gradually stopped barking and lay down intently watching in that direction, and growling at intervals.





The room that had been vacated for us had no windows, and as the only way in which we could have occupied it in safety would have been by closing the solid door, and excluding all air and light, we decided to spend the night on the veranda. The dog evidently belonged to the late occupant of the room and had been accustomed to sleeping there, for he lay contentedly at our feet and gave us a feeling of safety as we watched in turn through the long hours of the night.





## *Retreat*

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**A**T DAYBREAK NEXT MORNING WE very carefully stalked the kill, and were disappointed to find that the leopard had not returned to it, which we felt sure he would do after his failure to bag one of us the previous evening.

During the day, while Ibbotson dealt with some office work that had been sent out to him, I took a rifle and went off to see if I could get a shot at the leopard. Tracking on the hard and pine-needle-covered ground was not possible, so I made for the shoulder of the hill beyond which the villagers had told us there was heavy jungle. Here I found the ground very difficult to negotiate, for, in addition to dense scrub jungle through which it was not

possible to penetrate, there was a series of rock cliffs on which it was impossible for a human being to find foothold. In this area there was a surprisingly large herd of game, and on the paths that intersected it I found the tracks of kakar, ghooral, pig, and a solitary sarao. Of the leopard—except for a few old scratch-marks— I found no trace.

The gin-trap that had been sent off from Rudraprayag the previous day arrived while we were having lunch, and in the early evening we took it down to the glade and, after setting it, poisoned the kill with cyanide. I had no experience of poisons, nor had Ibbotson, but in a conversation with a doctor friend before leaving Naini Tal I had mentioned that Government wanted me to try every means to kill the man-eater, and that there was little use in my trying poison, as the records showed that the leopard thrived on it. I told him what poisons had hitherto been tried, and he then recommended my using cyanide, which was the best poison for the cat family. I had passed this information on to Ibbotson, and a few days previously a supply had arrived, with capsules with which to use it. We inserted a few of these capsules in the kill at the places where the leopard had eaten.

There was every hope of the leopard returning to the kill this second night, and as he had seen us on the tree the previous evening we decided not to sit up, but to leave him to the gin-trap and to the poison.

In a big pine-tree near the footpath we built a machan, which we padded with hay and on which we took up our position after we had eaten the dinner which Ibbotson cooked on the blue-flame stove. Here on the comfortable *machan* we were able to lie at full stretch and talk and smoke, for our only reason for being there was to listen for sounds from the direction of the kill. We watched and slept by turns, hoping to hear the angry roar of the leopard if by accident it walked into the trap, for here there was no well-used track along which to direct the leopard to it.

Once during the night a *kakar* barked, but in the opposite direction to that from which we expected the leopard to come.

At the first streak of dawn we climbed out of the tree and, after brewing ourselves a cup of tea, visited the kill, which we found lying just as we had left it.

Ibbotson left for Rudraprayag after an early breakfast, and I was packing my things and having a final word with the villagers before starting on my fifteen-day journey back to Naini Tal when a party of men arrived to give the news that a cow had been killed by a leopard in a village four miles away. They suspected that the cow had been killed by the man-eater, for the previous night— the night the leopard had followed Ibbotson and myself from the tree to the veranda— and towards the small hours of the morning, the leopard had made a determined attempt to break down the door of the headman's house; late the following evening, the cow had been killed in the jungle three hundred yards from this house. At the urgent request of these men I postponed my departure to Naini Tal and accompanied them back to their village, taking the gin-trap and a supply of poison with me.



The headman's house was on a little knoll surrounded by cultivated land, and was approached by a footpath which for a short distance ran over soft and boggy ground; here I found the pug-marks of the man-eater.

The headman had seen me approaching across the valley and had a steaming dish of tea brewed in fresh milk and sweetened with jaggery waiting for me. While I drank this rich and over-sweetened liquid on the courtyard, sitting on a reed couch upholstered with *ghooral* skins, he drew my attention to the condition of the door which two nights previously the leopard had attempted to break down, in which attempt it would undoubtedly have succeeded if he had not fortunately had some sawn timber in the house—intended for repairing the roof—which he had used to shore up the door from inside.

The headman was old and crippled with rheumatism, so he sent his son to show me the kill while he made room in the house for myself and my men.

I found the kill—a young cow in grand condition—lying on a flat bit of ground just above the cattle track, in an ideal position for setting up the gin-trap. Its back was against a tangle of wild rose-bushes, and its hooves were against a foot-high bank; while eating, the leopard had sat on the bank with its forepaws between the cow's legs.

Having dug away the ground between the cow's legs and removed it to a distance, I set the trap where the leopard had placed his paws and covered it over with big green leaves. Then, after sprinkling on a layer of earth, I replaced the dead leaves, bits of dry sticks, and splinters of bone in the exact position between the cow's legs in which I had found them. Not one of a hundred human beings going to the kill would have noticed that the ground had in any way been disturbed, and a deadly trap set.

My arrangements made to my satisfaction I retraced my steps and climbed a tree half-way between the kill and the headman's house, where I would be handy if needed at the trap.

Near sundown a pair of *kalege* pheasants and their brood of five chicks, which I had been watching for some time, suddenly took alarm and went

scuttling down the hill, and a few seconds later a *kakar* came dashing towards me and after barking under my tree for a little while, went off up the hill on tiptoe. Nothing happened after that, and when it was getting too dark under the shade of the trees for me to see the sights of my rifle, I slipped off the tree and myself tiptoed away on rubber-shod feet towards the village.

A hundred yards from the headman's house the track ran across an open glade, some thirty yards long and twenty yards wide. On the upper, hill side of the glade was a big rock. As I reached this open ground I felt I was being followed, and, determined to exploit the situation, I left the track and, taking two long steps over soft and spongy ground, lay down behind the rock, with only one eye showing in the direction of the kill.

For ten minutes I lay on the wet ground. When daylight had all but gone I regained the path and, taking every precaution, covered the remaining distance to the headman's house.

Once during the night the headman roused me from a sound sleep to tell me he had heard the leopard scratching on the door, and when I opened the door next morning I saw the pug-marks of the man-eater in the dust in front of it. These pug-marks I followed back to the glade, and found that the leopard had done just what I had done the previous evening. He had left the track where I had; had crossed the soft ground to the rock and, after regaining the track, had followed me to the house, round which he had walked several times.

On leaving the house the leopard had gone back along the track, and as I followed his pug-marks towards the kill my hopes rose high, for up to that time I had not fully realized the degree of cunning that a man-eating leopard can acquire after eight years of close association with human beings.

I left the track and approached from the high ground, and from a little distance away saw that the kill had gone, and that the ground where the trap had been buried was, except for two pug-marks, undisturbed.



Sitting on the foot-high bank, as he had done the first night, the leopard had put both front paws between the cow's legs, but on this occasion he had spread them wide apart and rested them on the buried levers of the trap which, released, would have closed the great jaws. Here, safe from the trap, he had eaten his meal, and when he had done, he skirted round the flat ground and, getting hold of the cow by the head, had dragged it through the rose-thorns and rolled it down the hill, where fifty yards lower down it had fetched up against an oak sapling. Content with his night's work, the leopard had then gone along the cattle track, and after following him for a mile I lost his tracks on hard ground.

There was no hope of the leopard returning to the kill. However, to salve my conscience for not having done so the previous night, I put a liberal dose of cyanide in the carcass of the cow. Truth to tell I hated the very thought of using poison then, and I hate it no less now.

I visited the kill in the morning and found that a leopard had eaten all that portion of the cow that I had poisoned. So sure was I that the poison had been eaten by a leopard that had accidentally come across the kill, and not by the man-eater, that on my return to the village I told the headman that I would not stay to recover the leopard, though I would pay a hundred rupees to anyone who found it and took its skin to the patwari. A month later the reward was claimed, and the skin of a leopard which had been dead many days was buried by the patwari.

It did not take my men long to pack up, and shortly after mid-day we started on our long journey back to Naini Tal. As we went down a narrow footpath to the Chatwapipal bridge a big rat snake leisurely crossed the path, and as I stood and watched it slip away Madho Singh, who was behind me, said, 'There goes the evil spirit that has been responsible for your failure.'

My action in leaving Garhwal to the tender mercies of the man-eater may appear heartless to you—it did so to me—and was adversely criticized in the press, for the leopard at that time was daily mentioned in the Indian papers. In extenuation I would urge that an effort entailing great strain

cannot be indefinitely sustained. There were twenty-four hours in every day of the many weeks I spent in Garhwal, and time and time again after sitting up all night, I walked endless miles next day, visiting distant villages from which reports had come of unsuccessful attacks by the man-eater. On many moonlit nights, when sitting in an uncomfortable position physical endurance had reached its limit, and when sitting where it would have been easy for the leopard to have got at me I had no longer been able to keep my eyes open. I had for hours walked the roads which were alone open to me and to the leopard, trying every trick I knew of to outwit my adversary, and the man-eater had, with luck beyond his deserts or with devilish cunning, avoided the bullet that a press of my finger would have sent into him, for on retracing my steps in the morning after these night excursions I had found from the pug-marks on the road that I was right in assuming I had been closely followed. To know that one is being followed at night— no matter how bright the moon may be— by a man-eater intent on securing a victim, gives one an inferiority complex that is very unnerving, and that is not mitigated by repetition.

Tired out in mind and in body, my longer stay at Rudraprayag would not have profited the people of Garhwal, and it might have cost me my own life. Knowing that the temporary abandonment of my self-imposed task would be severely criticized by the press, but that what I was now doing was right, I plodded on towards my distant home, having assured the people of Garhwal that I would return to help them as soon as it was possible for me to do so.





## *Fishing Interlude*

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I LEFT THE SCENE OF MY failure, weary and dispirited, in the late autumn of 1925, and returned to continue my labour, refreshed and full of hope, in the early spring of 1926.

On this my second visit to Garhwal in pursuit of the man-eater, I travelled by train to Kotdwara and went from there by foot to Pauri, thus saving eight days on the journey. At Pauri, Ibbotson joined me and accompanied me to Rudraprayag.

During my three months' absence from Garhwal the man-eater had killed ten human beings, and during these three months no attempt had been made by the terror-stricken inhabitants to kill the leopard.

The last of these ten kills—the victim was a small boy—had taken place on the left bank of the Alaknanda, two days before our arrival at Rudraprayag. We had received telegraphic news of this kill at Pauri, and though we had travelled as fast as it was possible for us to do, we were disappointed to learn from the patwari, who was awaiting our arrival at the

Inspection Bungalow, that the leopard disposed of the entire kill the previous night, leaving nothing of its small victim over which we could sit.

The boy had been killed at midnight in a village four miles from Rudraprayag, and as it was unlikely that the leopard had crossed the river after his undisturbed feed, we took steps immediately on our arrival to close the two suspension bridges.

During the winter Ibbotson had organized a very efficient intelligence service throughout the area in which the man-eater was operating. If in this area a dog, goat, cow, or human being was killed, or an attempt made to force open a door, news of the occurrence was conveyed to us by the service, and in this way we were able to keep in constant touch with the man-eater. Hundreds of false rumours of alleged attacks by the man-eater were brought to us, entailing endless miles of walking, but this was only to be expected, for in an area in which an established man-eater is operating everyone suspects their own shadows, and every sound heard at night is attributed to the man-eater.

One of these rumours concerned a man by the name of Galtu, a resident of Kunda, a village seven miles from Rudraprayag on the right bank of the Alaknanda. Galtu left the village in the evening to spend the night in his cattle shed a mile away from the village, and when his son went to the shed next morning he found his father's blanket half in and half out of the door of the shed, and in a patch of soft ground nearby he found what he thought was drag mark, and near it the pug-marks of the man-eater. Returning to the village he raised an alarm, and while sixty men went off to search for the body, four men were dispatched to Rudraprayag to inform us. Ibbotson and I were beating a hillside on the left bank of the river for the man-eater when the men arrived, and as I was convinced that the leopard was on our side of the river, and that there was no truth in the rumour that Galtu had been killed, Ibbotson sent a *patwari* back to Kunda with the four men, with instructions to make a personal search and report back to us. Next evening we received the *patwari*'s report, with a sketch of the pug-marks in the soft earth near the door of the shed. The report stated that an all-day search of the surrounding country, with two hundred men, had not resulted in finding

Galtu's remains, and that the search would be continued. The sketch showed six circles, the inner one as large as a plate, with five equally spaced circles round it, each the size of a tea cup; all the circles had been made with a compass. Five days later, and just as Ibbotson and I were setting out to sit up on the tower of the bridge, a procession came up to the bungalow led by an irate man who was protesting loudly that he had committed no offence that justified his being arrested and brought to Rudraprayag. The irate man was Galtu. After we had pacified him, he gave us his story. It appeared that just as he was leaving his house on the night he was alleged to have been carried off by the man-eater, his son arrived and informed him that he had paid Rs 100 for a pair of bullocks which Galtu asserted were not worth more than Rs 70. The wanton waste of good money had so angered him that, after sleeping the night in the cattle shed, he had got up early next morning and gone to a village ten miles away, where a married daughter of his was living. On his return to his village that morning, he had been arrested by the patwari, and he wanted to know what crime he had committed that justified his arrest. It was some little time before he saw the humour of the situation, but once having done so, he laughed as heartily as any of the assembled throng at the thought of an important person like a patwari, and two hundred of his friends, searching for five days for his remains, what time he was cooling off in a village ten miles away.

Ibbotson was averse to lying all night on the wind-swept tower of the Rudraprayag suspension bridge, and as wood and carpenters were available, he had a platform built in the arch of the tower, and on this platform we sat for the five nights Ibbotson was able to spend at Rudraprayag.

After Ibbotson's departure the leopard killed one dog, four goats, and two cows. The dog and goats had been eaten out on the nights on which they had been killed, but I sat over each of the cows for two nights. On the second night on which I was sitting up over the first cow, the leopard came, but just as I was raising my rifle and preparing to switch on the torch I had provided myself with, a woman in the house adjoining the one I was sitting in, thumped on the door preparatory to opening it, and unfortunately frightened the leopard away.

No human beings had been killed during this period, but a woman and her baby had been badly mauled. The leopard had forced open the door of the room in which she was sleeping with her baby, and seizing her arm had attempted to drag her out of the room. The woman fortunately was stout of heart, and had not fainted or lost her wits, and after the leopard— dragging her along the floor— had backed out of the room, she shut the door on it, and escaped with a badly lacerated arm and several deep wounds on her breast, while the baby escaped with one head wound. I sat in this room for the following two nights, but the leopard did not return.

I was returning one day towards the latter end of March, after visiting a village on the Kedarnath pilgrim route, when, as I approached a spot where the road runs close alongside the Mandakini river, and where there is a water fall ten to twelve feet high, I saw a number of men sitting on the rock at the head of the fall on the far side of the river, armed with a triangular net attached to a long bamboo pole. The roar of the water prevented conversation, so leaving the road I sat down on the rocks on my side of the fall, to have a rest and a smoke— for I had walked for that day— and to see what the men were doing.

Presently one of the men got to his feet, and as he pointed down excitedly into the foaming white water at the foot of the fall, two of his companions manning the long pole held the triangular net close to the fall. A large shoal of *mahseer* fish, varying in size from five to fifty pounds, were attempting to leap the fall. One of these fish, about ten pounds in weight, leapt clear of the fall and when falling back was expertly caught in the net. After the fish had been extracted and placed in a basket, the net was again held out close to the fall. I watched the sport for about an hour, during which time the men caught four fish, all about the same size— ten pounds.

On my previous visit to Rudraprayag I had been informed by the *chowkidar* in charge of the Inspection Bungalow that there was good fishing in the spring— before the snow-water came down— in both the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers, so I had come armed on this my second visit with a fourteen-foot split cane salmon rod, a silex reel with two

hundred and fifty yards of line, a few stout traces, and an assortment of home-made brass spoons varying in size from one to two inches.

The following morning— as no news had come in of the man-eater— I set off for the waterfall with my rod and tackle.

No fish were leaping the fall as they had been doing the previous day, and the men on the far side of the river were sitting in a group round a small fire smoking a hookah which was passing from hand to hand. They watched me with interest.

Below the waterfall was a pool thirty to forty yards wide, flanked on both sides by a wall of rock, and about two hundred yards long, one hundred yards of which was visible from where I stood at the head of the pool. The water in this beautiful and imposing pool was crystal-clear.

The rock face at the head of the pool rose sheer up out of the water to a height of twelve feet, and after keeping at this height for twenty yards, sloped gradually upwards to a height of a hundred feet. It was not possible to get down to water level anywhere on my side of the pool, nor would it be possible, or profitable, to follow a fish— assuming that I hooked one— along the bank, for at the top of the high ground there were trees and bushes, and at the tail of the pool the river cascaded down in a foaming torrent to its junction with the Alaknanda. To land a fish in this pool would be a difficult and a hazardous task, but the crossing of that bridge could be deferred until the fish had been hooked— and I had not yet put together my rod.





On my side of the pool the water— shot through with millions of small bubbles— was deep, and from about half-way across a shingle bottom was showing, over which four to six feet of water was flowing. Above this shingle bottom, every stone and pebble of which was visible in the clear water, a number of fish, ranging in size from three to ten pounds, were slowly moving upstream.

As I watched these fish, standing on the rocks twelve feet above the water with a two-inch spoon mounted with a single strong treble hook in my hand, a flight of fingerlings flashed out of the deep water and went skimming over the shingle bottom, hotly pursued by three big mahseer. Using the good salmon rod as friend Hardy had never intended that it should be used— and as it had been used on many previous occasions— I slung the spoon out, and in my eagerness over-estimated the distance, with the result that the spoon struck the rock on the far side of the pool, about two feet above the water. The falling of the spoon into the water coincided with the arrival of the fingerlings at the rock, and the spoon had hardly touched the water, when it was taken by the leading mahseer.

Striking with a long line from an elevated position entails a very heavy strain, but my good rod stood the strain, and the strong treble hook was firmly fixed in the mahseer's mouth. For a moment or two the fish did not appear to realize what had happened as, standing perpendicularly in the water with his white belly towards me, he shook his head from side to side, and then, possibly frightened by the dangling spoon striking against his head, he gave a mighty splash and went tearing downstream, scattering in all directions the smaller fish that were lying on the shingle bottom.

In his first run the *mahseer* ripped a hundred yards of line off the reel, and after a moment's check carried on for another fifty yards. There was plenty of line still on the reel, but the fish had now gone round the bend and was getting dangerously near the tail of the pool. Alternately easing and tightening the strain on the line, I eventually succeeded in turning his head upstream, and having done so, very gently pulled him round the bend, into the hundred yards of water I was overlooking.

Just below me a projection of rock had formed a backwater, and into this backwater the fish, after half an hour's game fight, permitted himself to be drawn.

I had now very definitely reached my bridge and had just regretfully decided that, as there was no way of crossing it, the fish would have to be cut adrift, when a shadow fell across the rock beside me. Peering over the rock into the backwater, the new arrival remarked that it was a very big fish, and in the same breath asked what I was going to do about it. When I told him that it would not be possible to draw the fish up the face of the rock, and that therefore the only thing to do was to cut it free, he said, 'Wait, sahib, I will fetch my brother.' His brother— a long and lanky stripling with dancing eyes— had quite evidently been cleaning out a cow shed when summoned, so telling him to go upstream and wash himself lest he should slip on the smooth rock, I held council with the elder man.

Starting from where we were standing, a crack, a few inches wide, ran irregularly down the face of the rock, ending a foot above the water in a ledge some six inches wide. The plan we finally agreed on was that the stripling— who presently returned with his arms and legs glistening with water— should go down to the ledge, while the elder brother went down the crack far enough to get hold of the stripling's left hand, while I lay on the rock holding the elder brother's other hand. Before embarking on the plan I asked the brothers whether they knew how to handle a fish and whether they could swim, and received the laughing answer that they had handled fish and swum in the river from childhood.

The snag in the plan was that I could not hold the rod and at the same time make a link in the chain. However, some risk had to be taken, so I put the rod down and held the line in my hand, and when the brothers had taken up position I sprawled on the rock and, reaching down, got hold of the elder brother's hand. Then very gently I drew the fish towards the rock, holding the line alternately with my left hand and with my teeth. There was no question that the stripling knew how to handle a fish, for before the fish had touched the rock, he had inserted his thumb into one side of the gills and his fingers into the other, getting a firm grip on the fish's throat. Up to this

point the fish had been quite amenable, but on having its throat seized, it lashed out, and for seconds it appeared that the three of us would go headlong into the river.

Both brothers were bare-footed, and when I had been relieved of the necessity of holding the line and was able to help with both hands, they turned and, facing the rock, worked their way up with their toes, while I pulled lustily from on top.

When the fish at last had been safely landed, I asked the brothers if they ate fish, and on receiving their eager answer that they most certainly did, when they could get any, I told them I would give them the fish we had just landed— a *mahseer* in grand condition weighing a little over thirty pounds — if they would help me to land another fish for my men. To this they very readily agreed.

The treble had bitten deep into the leathery underlip of the mahseer, and as I cut it out, the brothers watched interestedly. When the hook was free, they asked if they might have a look at it. Three hooks in one, such a thing had never been seen in their village. The bit of bent brass of course acted as a sinker. With what were the hooks baited? Why should fish want to eat brass? And was it really brass, or some kind of hardened bait? When the spoon, and the trace with its three swivels, had been commented on and marvelled at, I made the brothers sit down and watch while I set about catching the second fish.

The biggest fish in the pool were at the foot of the fall, but here in the foaming white water, in addition to *mahseer* were some very big goonch, a fish that takes a spoon of dead bait very readily, and which is responsible for 90 per cent of the tackle lost in our hill rivers through its annoying habit of diving to the bottom of the pool when hooked and getting its head under a rock from where it is always difficult, and often impossible, to dislodge it.

No better spot than the place from where I had made my first cast was available, so here I again took up my position, with rod in hand and spoon held ready for casting.

The fish on the shingle bottom had been disturbed while I was playing the *mahseer* and by our subsequent movements on the face of the rock but were now beginning to return, and presently an exclamation from the brothers, and an excited pointing of fingers, drew my attention to a big fish downstream where the shingle bottom ended and the deep water began. Before I was able to make a cast, the fish turned and disappeared in the deep water, but a little later it reappeared, and as it came into the shallow water I made a cast, but owing to the line being wet the cast fell short. The second cast was beautifully placed and beautifully timed, the spoon striking the water exactly where I wanted it to. Waiting for a second to give the spoon time to sink, I started to wind in the line, giving the spoon just the right amount of spin, and as I drew it along in little jerks, the *mahseer* shot forward, and next moment, with the hook firmly fixed in his mouth, jumped clean out of the water, fell back with a great splash, and went madly downstream, much to the excitement of the spectators, for the men on the far bank had been watching the proceedings as intently as the brothers.

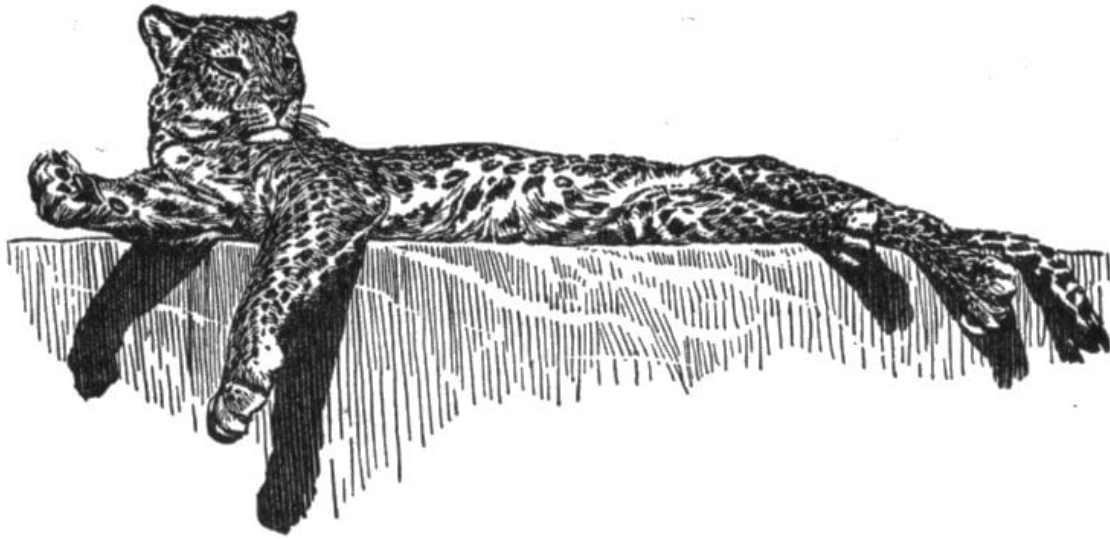
As the reel spun round and the line paid out, the brothers— now standing one on either side of me— urged me not to let the fish go down the run at the trail of the pool. Easier said than done, for it is not possible to stop the first mad rush of a *mahseer* of any size with risking certain break, or the tearing away of the hook-hold. Our luck was in, or else the fish feared the run, for when there was less than fifty yards of line on the reel he checked, and though he continued to fight gamely he was eventually drawn round the bend, and into the little backwater at the foot of the rock.

The landing of this second fish was not as difficult as the landing of the first had been, for we each knew our places on the rock and exactly what to do.

Both fish were the same length, but the second was a little heavier than the first, and while the elder brother set off in triumph for his village with his fish carried over his shoulder— threaded on a grass cable he had made — the stripling begged to be allowed to accompany me back to the Inspection Bungalow, and to carry both my fish and my rod. Having in the days of long ago been a boy myself, and having had a brother who fished,

there was no need for the stripling when making his request to have said, 'If you will let me carry both the fish and the rod, and will walk a little distance behind me, sahib, all the people who see me on the road, and in the bazaar, will think that I have caught this great fish, the like of which they have never seen.'





## *Death of a Goat*

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**I**BBOTSON RETURNED FROM PAURI ON the last day of March, and the following morning, while we were having breakfast, we received a report that a leopard had called very persistently the previous night near a village to the north-west of Rudraprayag, about a mile from the place where we had killed the leopard in the gin-trap.

Half a mile to the north of the village, and on the shoulder of the great mountain, there was a considerable area of rough and broken ground where there were enormous rocks and caves, and deep holes in which the locals said their forefathers had quarried copper. Over the whole of this area there was scrub jungle, heavy in some places and light in others, extending down the hillside to within half a mile of the terraced fields above the village.

I had long suspected that the man-eater used this ground as a hideout when he was in the vicinity of Rudraprayag, and I had frequently climbed to a commanding position above the broken ground in the hope of finding him basking on the rocks in the early morning sun, for leopards are very

fond of doing this in a cold climate, and it is a very common way of shooting them, for all that is needed is a little patience, and accuracy of aim.

After an early lunch Ibbotson and I set out armed with our .275 rifles, and accompanied by one of Ibbotson's men carrying a short length of rope. At the village we purchased a young male goat—the leopard having killed all the goats that I had purchased from time to time.

From the village, a rough goat track ran straight up the hill to the edge of the broken ground, where it turned left, and after running across the face of the hill for a hundred yards carried on round the shoulder of the mountain. The track where it ran across the hill was bordered on the upper side by scattered bushes, and on the steep lower side by short grass.

Having tied the goat to a peg firmly driven into the ground at the bend in the track, about ten yards below the scrub jungle, we went down the hill for a hundred and fifty yards to where there were some big rocks, behind which we concealed ourselves. The goat was one of the best callers I have ever heard, and while his shrill and piercing bleat continued there was no necessity for us to watch him, for he had been very securely tied and there was no possibility of the leopard carrying him away.

The sun— a fiery red ball— was a hand's breadth from the snow mountains above Kedarnath when we took up our position behind the rocks, and half an hour later, when we had been in shadow for a few minutes, the goat suddenly stopped calling. Creeping to the side of the rock and looking through a screen of grass, I saw the goat with ears cocked, looking up towards the bushes; as I watched, the goat shook his head, and backed to the full length of the rope.

The leopard had undoubtedly come, attracted by the calling of the goat, and that he had not pounced before the goat became aware of his presence was proof that he was suspicious. Ibbotson's aim would be more accurate than mine, for his rifle was fitted with a telescopic sight, so I made room for him, and as he lay down and raised his rifle I whispered to him examine carefully the bushes in the direction in which the goat was looking, for I felt

sure that if the goat could see the leopard— and all the indications were that it could— Ibbotson should also be able to see it through his powerful telescope. For minutes Ibbotson kept his eye to the telescope and then shook his head, laid down the rifle, and made room for me.

The goat was standing in exactly the same position in which I had last seen it, and taking direction from it I fixed the telescope on the same bush at which it was looking. The flicker of an eyelid, or the very least movement of ear or even whiskers, would have been visible through the telescope, but though I also watched for minutes I too could see nothing.

When I took my eye away from the telescope I noted that the light was rapidly fading, and that the goat now showed as a red-and-white blur on the hillside. We had a long way to go and waiting longer would be both useless and dangerous, so getting to my feet I told Ibbotson it was time for us to make a move.

Going up to the goat— who from the time he had stopped bleating had not made a sound— we freed it from the peg, and with the man leading it we set off for the village. The goat quite evidently had never had a rope round its neck before and objected violently to being led, so I told the man to take the rope off— my experience being that when a goat is freed after having been tied up in the jungle, through fear or for want of companionship it follows at heel like a dog. This goat, however, had ideas of its own, and no sooner had the man removed the rope from its neck, than it turned and ran up the track.

It was too good a calling goat to abandon— it had attracted the leopard once, and might do so again. Moreover, we had only a few hours previously paid good money for it, so we in turn ran up the track in hot pursuit. At the bend, the goat turned to the left, and we lost sight of it. Keeping to the track, as the goat had done, we went to the shoulder of the hill where a considerable extent of the hill, clothed in short grass, was visible, and as the goat was nowhere in sight we decided it had taken a short cut back to the village, and started to retrace our steps. I was leading, and as we got half-way along the hundred yards of track, bordered on the upper side by



scattered bushes and on the steep lower side by short grass, I saw something white on the track in front of me. The light had nearly gone, and on cautiously approaching the white object I found it was the goat—laid head and tail on the narrow track, in the only position in which it could have been laid to prevent it from rolling down the steep hillside.

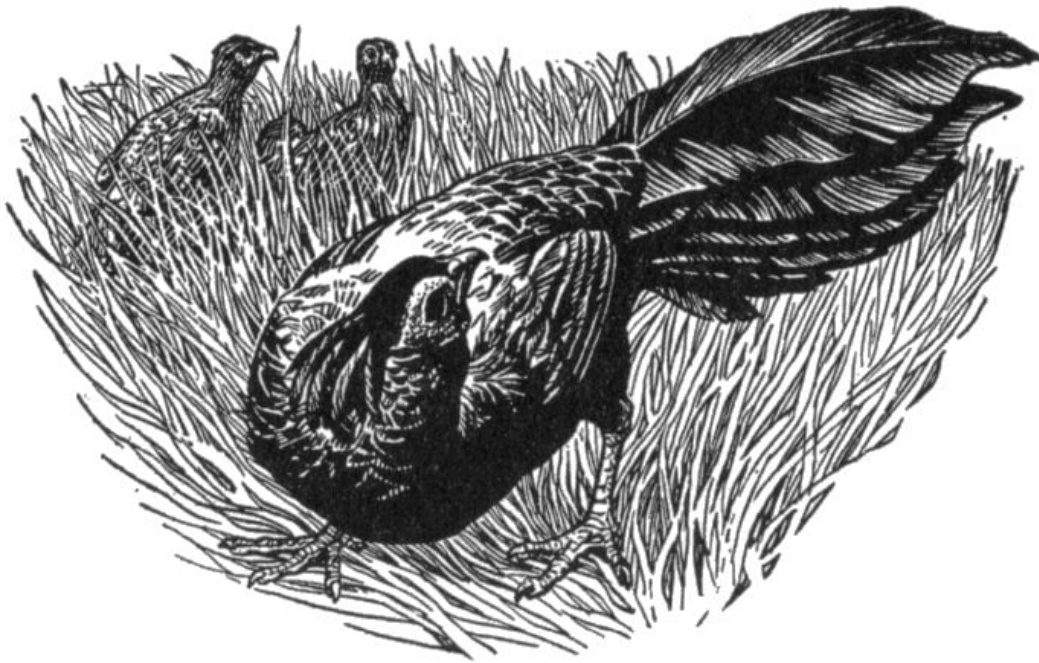
Blood was oozing from its throat, and when I placed my hand on it the muscles were still twitching.

It was as though the man-eater—for no other leopard would have killed the goat and laid it on the track—had said, ‘Here, if you want your goat so badly, take it; and as it is now dark and you have a long way to go, we will see which of you lives to reach the village.’

I do not think all three of us would have reached the village alive if I had not, very fortunately, had a full box of matches with me (Ibbotson at that time was a non-smoker). Striking a match and casting an anxious look all round and taking a few hurried steps, and then again striking another match, we stumbled down the rough track until we got to within calling distance of the village. Then, at our urgent summons, men with lanterns and pine torches came up to meet us.

We had left the goat lying where the leopard had placed it, and when I returned at a daybreak next morning I found the pug-marks of the man-eater where he had followed us down to the village, and I found the goat untouched and lying just as we had left it.





## *Cyanide Poisoning*

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AS I WAS RETURNING TO THE Inspection Bungalow after visiting the goat that had been killed the previous night, I was informed in the village that my presence was urgently needed at Rudraprayag, for news had just been received that the man-eater had killed a human being the previous night. My informants were unable to give me any particulars as to where the kill had taken place, but as the pug-marks of the man-eater showed that, after following us to the village, it had gone back up the goat track and turned right at the bend, I assumed— rightly, as I later found—that the leopard, after failing to bag one of us, had secured a victim farther up the mountain-side.

At the bungalow I found Ibbotson in conversation with a man by the name of Nand Ram. Nand Ram's village was about four miles from where we had sat the previous evening. Half a mile above this village and on the far side of a deep ravine, a man of the depressed class, named Gawiya, had

cleared a small area of forest land and built himself a house in which he lived with his mother, wife, and three children. At daybreak that morning, Nand Ram had heard the wailing of women from the direction of Gawiya's house and, on his shouting out and asking what was wrong, he had been informed that 'the man of the house' had been carried off by the man-eater half an hour previously. With this information Nand Ram had come hot-foot to the Inspection Bungalow.

Ibbotson had had the Arab and the English mare saddled, and after we had eaten a good meal we set out, with Nand Ram to show us the way. There were no roads on the hill, only goat and cattle tracks, and as the big English mare found the hairpin bends on these tracks difficult to negotiate we sent the horses back and did the rest of the hot and steep climb on foot.

Arrived at the little isolated clearing in the forest, the two distracted women—who appeared to be nursing the hope that the 'man of the house' might still be alive—showed us where Gawiya had been sitting near the door of the house when the leopard had seized him. The leopard had caught the unfortunate man by the throat, thus preventing him from making any sound, and after dragging him for a hundred yards had killed him. Then he had carried him for four hundred yards to a little hollow surrounded by dense brushwood. The wailing of the women and the shouting of Nand Ram had evidently disturbed the leopard at his meal, for he had only eaten the throat and jaw, and a small portion of one shoulder and thigh.

There were no trees within sight of the kill on which we could sit, so we poisoned the kill with cyanide at the three places where the leopard had eaten, and as it was now getting towards evening we took up position on a hill several hundred yards away, from where we could over look the hollow in which the kill was lying. The leopard was undoubtedly in the dense brushwood, but though we lay in our concealed position and watched for two hours, we saw nothing of him. At dusk we lit the lantern we had provided ourselves with, and went back to the bungalow.

We were up very early next morning, and it was just getting light when we again sat down on the hill over-looking the hollow. We saw and heard

nothing, and when the sun had been up an hour, we went to the kill, the leopard had not touched the three places where we had buried the poison, but had eaten the other shoulder and leg, and had then carried the body away for a short distance and hidden it under some bushes.

Again there were no trees overlooking the kill on which we could sit, and after a prolonged discussion we eventually decided that while Ibbotson went down the hill for a mile to a village where there was a big mango tree, in which he could make himself a *machan* and spend the night, I would sit about four hundred yards from the kill, over a village path on which the previous day we had seen the pug-marks of the man-eater.

The tree I selected to sit in was a rhododendron which many years previously had been cut about fifteen feet above ground. Stout branches had grown out from the cut, and sitting on the old stump surrounded by the branches I had a perfect seat and perfect concealment.

Facing me was a steep well-wooded hill with a dense undergrowth of bracken and dwarf bamboo. Running across the face of the hill east and west was a well-used footpath; the rhododendron tree was growing about ten feet below this footpath.

From my seat in the tree I had an uninterrupted view of a length of about ten yards of the path, which to my left crossed a ravine and carried on at the same level on the far side, and to my right, and some three hundred yards farther on, passed a little below the bushes where the kill was lying. There was no water in the ravine where the path crossed it, but thirty yards lower down and immediately below, and three or four yards from, the root of my tree, there were several small pools—the start of a little spring which lower down became a stream providing drinking water to the villagers and irrigation for their crops.

The ten yards of path of which I had an uninterrupted view was joined at right-angles by a path coming down the hill from the house three hundred yards above me where Gawiya had been killed. Thirty yards up this path there was a bend, and from this point a small depression ran down to the

lower path— the points where the depression started on the upper path and ended on the lower were not in my view.

There was no need for a torch, for it was a brilliant moonlit night, and if the leopard came along the level path or down the path from the house— as its pug-marks showed it had done the previous day— I should get an easy shot at a range of from twenty to forty feet.

I had gone down the hill a short distance with Ibbotson, and then a little before sunset had taken up my position on the tree. A few minutes later three *kalege* pheasants— a cock and two hens— came down the hill, and after drinking at the spring went back the way they had come. On both occasions they had passed under my tree, and that they had not seen me was proof that my hide was a good one.

The early part of the night was silent, but at eight o'clock a *kakar* started barking in the direction of the kill. The leopard had arrived, and I was convinced he had not gone to the kill along either of the paths I was watching. After barking for a minutes the *kakar* stopped, and thereafter the night was again silent up to ten o'clock, when the *kakar* again barked. The leopard had been at the kill for two hours— sufficient time for him to have had a good meal, and for him to have poisoned himself several times over. And there was a good chance of his having done so, for on this second night the kill had been very effectively poisoned, the cyanide having been buried deep in the victim's flesh.

Without closing an eye I sat watching the hill in front of me, where the moonlight was so brilliant that I could clearly see every blade of grass, and at 2 a.m. I heard the leopard coming down the path from the direction of the house. I had scattered dry leaves on this path, and also on the lower path, with the object of getting some warning of the leopard's approach, and that he was now walking carelessly over these leaves, and not making any attempt at silence, filled me with hope— though I expected within the next few seconds to put a bullet into him— that all was not well with him.

At the bend in the path the leopard made a short pause, and then leaving the path entered the little depression and followed it down to the lower path, on reaching which he again paused.

I had sat without movement for hours with my hands on the rifle lying across my knees, and as I was convinced that he would come along the path, I decided to let him pass in front of me, and when there was no longer any danger of his seeing the movement raise the rifle to my shoulder, and hit him where I wanted to. For seconds I watched the path, expecting to see his head appear from behind the screen of branches, and then, when tension was becoming unbearable, I heard him jump down off the path and come diagonally across the hill towards my tree. For a moment I thought he had in some mysterious way become aware of my presence on the tree and, not liking the flavour of his last kill, was intent on securing another human victim. His object, however, in leaving the path was not to try to get at me but to take a short cut down to the spring, for he passed the foot of the tree without a pause, and next second I heard him eagerly and noisily lapping water.

From the leopard's behaviour on the hill, and from the way he was now drinking, I was convinced he had poisoned himself, but not having had any previous experience of the effect of cyanide, I did not know how long the poison would take to act. For ten minutes after the leopard had stopped drinking, and just as I was beginning to hope that he had died at the spring, I heard him going up the hill on the far side of the ravine, all sound ceasing when he regained the path which carried on round the shoulder of the hill.

At no time, either when the leopard was coming down the path, coming down the depression, coming across the hill to the foot of my tree, when drinking, or going up the hill on the far side of the ravine, had I seen him, for either by accident or intent he had kept under cover to which not a glint of moonlight had penetrated.

There was now no hope of my getting a shot, but this was not of much account if the poison was as potent as the doctor in Naini Tal had claimed that it was.

I sat on for the rest of the night, watching the path and listening for sounds. At daylight Ibbotson returned, and while we brewed ourselves a very welcome cup of tea I told him of the night's happenings.

On visiting the kill we found that the leopard had eaten the leg from which he had taken a small portion two nights previously, and in which we had buried a full dose of poison, and that he had in addition eaten two other doses of poison, one from the left shoulder and the other from the back.

It was now necessary to make a search for the leopard, and for this purpose the *patwari*, who had returned with Ibbotson, set off to collect men. At about midday the *patwari* returned with two hundred men, and with these we made a line and beat the whole side of the hill in the direction in which the leopard had gone.

Half a mile from where the leopard had quenched his thirst, and in the direct line in which I had heard him going away, there were some big rocks at the foot of which there was a cave extending far into the hill, with an opening large enough to admit a leopard. Near the mouth of this cave the leopard had scratched up the ground, and rid himself of his victim's toes—which he had swallowed whole.

Willing hands brought loose stones from the hillside, and when we left the cave we had sealed it beyond all possibility of any leopard that might be lurking in it escaping.

Next morning I returned with a roll of one-inch wire-netting and a number of iron tent-pegs, and, after removing the stones, very effectively wired up the mouth of the cave. Thereafter for the following ten days I visited the cave morning and evening, and as during this period no news of the man-eater came in from any village on the left bank of the Alaknanda, my hopes each day grew stronger that on my next visit I would surely get some indication that the leopard had died in the cave.

On the tenth morning, when I returned from my visit to the cave— where I had found the netting undisturbed— Ibbotson greeted me with the news



that a woman had been killed the previous night in a village five miles away, and about a mile above the Rudraprayag-Badrinath pilgrim road.

Quite evidently cyanide was not the right poison for an animal that had the reputation of thriving on, and being stimulated by, arsenic and strychnine. That the leopard had eaten the cyanide there could be no doubt whatever, nor was there any doubt that he had entered the cave, for his hairs were adhering to the rock where his back had come in contact with it when entering the cave.

An overdose might account for the poison not having had the desired effect and a second opening somewhere farther up the hill might account for his escape from the cave. Even so, it was no longer any matter of surprise to me— who had only been acquainted with the leopard for a few short months— that the people of Garhwal, who had lived in close and intimate association with him for eight long years, should credit him— animal or spirit— with supernatural powers, and that they should cling to the belief that nothing but fire would rid them of this evil spirit.





## *Touch and Go*

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NEWS THAT IS OF IMPORTANCE TO every individual travels fast, and during the past ten days everyone in Garhwal had heard of the poisoning of the man-eater, and of our hope that we had sealed it up in a cave. It was natural therefore for risks to have been taken, and quite evidently the leopard, having recovered from the effects of the poison and found a way out of the cave, had found the first person who was taking a risk.

We had the day before us, for I had returned early from my visit to the cave, and after breakfast, mounted on Ibbotson's surefooted horses and carrying our rifles, we set out for the village where the woman was reported to have been killed.

After a fast ride up the pilgrim road we took a track that went diagonally across the hill, and a mile along this track, where the path from the village joined it, there were signs of a struggle and a big pool of blood.

The headman, and relatives of the victim, were waiting for us at the village, and they showed us where the leopard had seized the woman as she was in the act of closing the door of her house behind her. From this point the leopard had dragged the woman along on her back for a hundred yards to the junction of the tracks, where he had released his hold, and after a violent struggle had killed her. The people in the village had heard the woman's screams as she was being dragged along the ground and as she was struggling for her life with the leopard, but had been too frightened to render any help.

When the woman was dead, the leopard had picked her up and carried her over some waste land, across an open ravine a hundred yards wide, and up the hill on the far side for another two hundred yards. There were no drag marks, but the blood trail was easy to follow, and it led us to a flat bit of ground, four feet wide and twenty feet long. On the upper side of this narrow strip of ground there was a perpendicular bank eight feet high with a stunted medlar-tree growing on it, and on the lower side of the narrow strip the hill fell steeply away, and growing on it was a wild rose-bush, which had reached up and smothered the medlar-tree.

Lying huddled up between the steep bank and the rose-bush, with her head against the bank, with every vestige of clothing stripped from her, and with her naked body flecked with white rose-petals that had fallen from above was the kill—an old grey-haired lady, seventy years of age.

For this pitiful kill leopard would have to pay with his life, and after a short council of war, Ibbotson, leading the spare horse, returned to Rudraprayag for the things we needed, while I set off with my rifle to see whether it was possible to make contact with the man-eater in daylight.

This part of the country was new to me, and the first thing to do was to reconnoitre the ground. I had already noted while at the village that the hill went steeply up from the ravine to a height of four to five thousand feet; that about two thousand feet of the top of the hill was clothed with dense oak and pine forest, below which was an open stretch of short grass about half a mile wide, and that below the grass was scrub jungle.

Keeping now to the edge of the grass and scrub jungle I went round the shoulder of the hill, and found in front of me a wide depression, extending for half a mile down to the pilgrim road, and evidently caused in the days of long ago by a landslide. Beyond this depression, which was about a hundred yards wide at the upper end and about three hundred yards wide where it met the road, the ground was open. The ground in the depression was damp, and growing on this damp ground were a number of big trees, and under the tree a dense growth of scrub jungle. At the upper end of the depression was a cliff of overhanging rock, varying in height from twenty to forty feet, and about a hundred yards long; half-way along the cliff was a deep cleft a few feet wide, down which a tiny stream was trickling. Above the rocks was a narrow belt of scrub jungle, and above that again, open grassland.

I had reconnoitred the ground with care, for I did not want the leopard—which I was convinced was lying up in the depression—to be aware of my presence before it suited me. It was now necessary to find approximately where the leopard was most likely to be lying up, and to gain this information I went back to the kill.

We had been told in the village that it had got light shortly after the woman had been killed, and as it must have taken the leopard some little time to effect the kill, carry his victim four hundred yards, and eat a portion of it, it was reasonable to assume that he had left the spot where he had hidden the kill when day was fully established.

The hill on which the kill was lying was in full view of the village, in which at this hour there must have been considerable movement; the leopard therefore on leaving the kill would very naturally have kept to cover as far as was possible, and working on this assumption, and also because the ground was too hard to show pug-marks, I set out to follow him along the line I assumed he had taken.

When I had covered half a mile and was out of view of the village and was approaching the depression, I was gratified to find that I had followed on the leopard's tracks foot by foot, for in the lee of a bush where there was

some loose earth, I found where he had been lying for several hours. His pug-marks when leaving this spot showed that he had entered the depression about fifty yards below the cliff of rock.

For half an hour I lay where the leopard had lain, watching the small area of tree and scrub jungle in front of me in the hope that the leopard would make some slight movement and give away his position.

After I had been watching for a few minutes a movement among the dead leaves attracted my attention, and presently two scimitar babblers came into view industriously turning over the leaves, looking for grubs. Where carnivores are concerned, these birds are among the most reliable informants in the jungle, and I hoped later to make use of this pair to help in locating the leopard.

No movement had been visible and no sound had come to indicate that the leopard was in the depression; but that he was there I was still convinced, and having failed to get a shot in one way I decided to try another way.

Without coming out into the open, there were two natural lines of retreat for the leopard, one down the hill towards the pilgrim road, and the other up the hill. To move him down the hill would not profit me, but if I moved him up the hill he would for a certainty go up the cleft in the rock cliff to gain the shelter of the bushes above the cliff, and while he was doing so, there was a reasonable chance of my getting a shot.

Entering the depression a little below where I thought the leopard was, I started to zigzag very slowly across it, gaining a few feet in height at each turn. There was as yet no need for me to keep an eye on the cleft, for the babblers were on the ground a few feet below it, and they would let me know when the leopard was on the move. I had gained about forty yards in height in my movements forward and backwards across the depression and was about ten yards from, and a little to the left of the cleft, when the babblers rose in alarm and, flying into a small oak tree and hopping about excitedly on the branches, started to give their clear and ringing alarm call,

which can in the hills be heard for a distance of half a mile. Holding the rifle ready to take a snap shot, I stood perfectly still for a minute, and then started slowly moving forward.

The ground here was wet and slippery and, with my eyes fixed on the cleft, I had only taken two steps when my rubber-soled shoes slipped on the wet surface; and while I was endeavouring to regain my balance, the leopard sprang up the cleft, and in the bushes above put up a covey of *kalege* pheasants, which came sailing down over my head.

My second attempt had failed, and though it would have been quite easy for me to have moved the leopard back to where he had started from, it would have been of no use for me to do so, for, from above, the cleft in the rock was not visible until one was right up to it, and long before I gained the position the leopard would have been far down the depression.

Ibbotson and I had arranged to meet in the open ravine at 2 p.m., and a little before that hour he returned from Rudraprayag, accompanied by several men carrying the things he had gone to fetch. These consisted of food, and drink—in the way of tea—our old friend the petromax lamp—which on this occasion I decided I would carry myself, if the necessity arose—two spare rifles and ammunition, my fishing-reel, a liberal supply of cyanide, and the gin-trap.

Sitting in the ravine by a clear stream of water, we had our lunch and brewed ourselves cups of tea, and then went over to the kill.

I will give a description of the position of the kill, to enable you to follow our movements and the subsequent happenings.

The kill was lying about five feet from the near or ravine end of the flat strip of ground, which was four feet wide and about twenty feet long. The upper side of this strip of ground was protected by a high bank, and the lower side by a steep drop and a spreading rose-bush. The stunted medlar tree on the bank was too small to allow a *machan* being made in it, so we decided to depend entirely on a gun-trap, poison, and the gin-trap; having come to this decision we set about our preparations.

First we poisoned the kill, of which the leopard had— for want of time— only eaten a small portion; hoping that on this occasion he would only consume sufficient to poison himself effectively. Then, while I bent over the kill in the position we anticipated the leopard would assume when eating, Ibbotson sighted and securely lashed his .256 Mannlicher— which had a hair trigger— and my .450 high-velocity rifle to two saplings, fifteen yards on our approach side of the kill.

There were no insuperable obstacles to the leopard getting at the kill from any side he might wish to, but his most natural line of approach from where I had left him was along the fifteen feet or so of flat ground, and on this strip of flat ground we proceeded to bury the huge gin-trap, first removing from the ground every dead leaf, bit of stick, and blade of grass that were lying on it.

After we had dug a hole sufficiently long, wide, and deep— removing the displaced earth to a distance— we put the gin-trap in it, and when the powerful springs that closed the jaws had been depressed, and the plate that constituted the trigger adjusted as delicately as we dared set it, we covered the whole trap with a layer of green leaves, over which we sprinkled earth, and blades of grass in the position we had found them. So carefully had the trap been set in the ground that we who had set it found it difficult to determine its exact position.

My fishing-reel was now produced and one end of the dressed silk line was tied to the trigger of one rifle, looped round the butt-end, and taken to within ten feet of the kill, from where it was taken back, looped round the butt-end of the second rifle, and tied to the trigger. The line was then cut— much to my regret, for it was a new and very good line— and after the end had been tied round the woman's waist, the line was passed through the loop, the lines to the triggers pulled taut, and a secure knot was tied. The line was then cut for the second time.

As we cast a final look over our handiwork— which appeared very good to us— it struck us that if the leopard was to wander round and approach the kill from our side, and not from the side we expected him to come, he

might avoid both the guns and the gin-trap, and to prevent his doing so we sent to the village for a crowbar, while we cut five thornbushes from some little distance away. With the crowbar we made five holes a foot deep, on our side of the flat strip of ground, and into these holes we planted the bushes, stamping the earth round them and making them almost as secure and quite as natural to look at as when they were growing on the hillside. We were now quite satisfied that no animal bigger than a rat could approach the kill and eat any portion of it without meeting death in one form or another, so throwing off the safety-catches of the rifles, we returned to the village.

Fifty yards from the village, and close to where we had on our arrival found the pool of blood, there was a big wide-spreading mango tree. In this tree we made a *machan* from planks procured from the village, and on it we piled a lot of sweet-smelling rice straw, for it was our intention to spend the night on it, in anticipation of having to finish off the leopard if he was caught in the gin-trap.

Near sundown we took our position on the machan, which was long enough for us to lie on at length and wide enough for us to lie side by side. The distance from the *machan* to the kill across the ravine was two hundred yards, and the kill was on a higher level than the *machan* by about a hundred feet.

Ibbotson feared that his aim with the telescopic sight fitted to his rifle would not be quite accurate, so while he took a pair of powerful field-glasses from their case, I loaded my .275 rifle. Our plan was that while Ibbotson concentrated on the portion of the hill along which we expected the leopard to come, I would keep a general look-out all over the hill, and if we saw the leopard, I would risk taking a shot, even if the shot had to be taken at the extreme range to which my rifle was sighted, which was three hundred yards.

While Ibbotson dozed, I smoked and watched the shadows cast by the hills in the west slowly creep up the hill in front of us, and when the rays from the setting sun were gilding the crest of the hill red, Ibbotson awoke



and picked up his field-glasses, and I picked up my rifle, for the time had now come when we could expect the leopard to make his appearance. There was still some forty live-minutes of daylight left, and during the time we intently scanned— I with a pair of eyes that few are blessed with, and Ibbotson with his field-glasses— every foot of the considerable expanse of hill visible from our machan, without seeing the movement of a bird or animal.

When there was no longer sufficient light to shoot by, I put down my rifle, and a little later Ibbotson returned his field-glasses to their case. One chance of killing the leopard had gone, but there were still three chances left, so we were not unduly depressed.

Shortly after dark it came on to rain, and I whispered to Ibbotson that I feared it would prove our undoing, for if the additional weight of rain-water on the delicately set gin-trap did not set it off, the contracting of the fishing-line due to getting wet, no matter how slight it might be, would to a certainty fire off his hair-trigger rifle. Some time later, and while it was still raining, Ibbotson asked me what time it was. I had a luminous wrist-watch, and I had just told him it was a quarter to eight when a succession of savage and angry roars came from the direction of the kill— the leopard, the much-famed man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag, was at long last in the gin-trap.

Ibbotson took a flying leap from the *machan* while I swung down from a branch, and that neither of us broke limbs in the descent can only be attributed to luck. The petromax lamp hidden in a nearby yam field was found, and while Ibbotson proceeded to light it, I gave expression to my fears and doubts, and admit I deserved Ibbotson's rejoinder, 'You are a rotten pessimist. First you think a few drops of rain are going to spring the trap and fire off my rifle, and now you think because the leopard is not making a noise that it has got out of the trap.' That was just what I was thinking, and fearing, for on that other occasion when we had trapped a leopard it had roared and growled continuously, whereas this one, after that one expression of rage which had brought us rumbling out of the machan, had been ominously silent.

Ibbotson is an expert with all makes of lamps and in a very short time he had the petromax lit and pumped up, and throwing our doubts to the winds — for even Ibbotson was by now beginning to suspect the silence— we set off over the rough ground as hard as we could go, circling wide to avoid the fishing-lines and a possible angry leopard, and approached the kill from above. When we got to the high bank and looked down we saw the hole in the ground, but no gin-trap. Just as our hopes were bounding up, the brilliant light of the petromax revealed the trap; with its jaws closed and empty, ten yards down the hillside. The kill was no longer lying with its head against the bank, and a glance revealed that a considerable portion of it had been eaten.

Our thoughts were too bitter to give expression to as we went back to the mango tree and climbed into the machan. There was no longer any need for us to keep awake, so heaping some of the straw over ourselves, for we had no bedding and the night was cold, we went to sleep.

At the first streak of dawn a fire was built near the mango tree and water heated, and after we had drunk several cups of tea and warmed ourselves at the fire, we set off for the kill, accompanied by the *patwari* and several of Ibbotson's and my men, together with a number of men from the village.

I mention the fact that there were two of us, and that we had the *patwari* and a number of men with us, for had I been alone I would have hesitated to relate what I am now going to tell you.

Fiend or animal, had the slayer of the old woman been present and watched our overnight preparations it would even then have been difficult to understand how it had, on a dark and rainy night, avoided capture or death in one form or another. The rain, though light, had been sufficient to soften the ground, and we were able to reconstruct and to follow his every movement of the previous night.

The leopard had come from the direction from which we had expected him to come, and on arrival at the flat strip of ground, had skirted round and below it, and had then approached the kill from the side where we had

firmly planted the thornbushes. Three of these bushes he had pulled up, making a sufficiently wide gap to go through, and then, getting hold of the kill, he had drawn it a foot or so towards the rifles, thus slackening off the fishing-lines. Having done this he had started to eat, avoiding while doing so contact with the fishing-line that was tied round the woman's body. We had not thought it necessary to poison either the head or the neck. These he had eaten first, and then— very carefully— he had eaten all that portion of the body between the many doses of poison we had inserted in different places.

After satisfying his hunger the leopard left the kill with the intention of seeking shelter from the rain and, while he was doing so, what I feared would happen actually happened. The weight of rainwater on the very finely set trap had depressed the plate that constituted the trigger, and released the springs just as the leopard was stepping over the trap, and the great jaws had met on either side of the stifle, or knee-joint, of his hind leg. And here was the greatest tragedy of all, for when bringing the trap up from Rudraprayag the men carrying it had let it fall, and one of the three-inch-long teeth had been broken off, and the stifle of the leopard's left hind leg had been caught by the jaws exactly where this missing tooth formed a gap in the otherwise perfectly fitting set of teeth. But for this missing tooth the leopard would have been fixed to the trap without any possibility of getting free, for the grip on his leg had been sufficiently good for him to lift the eighty-pound trap out of the hole in which we had buried it, and carry it ten yards down the hillside. And now; instead of the leopard, the jaws of the trap only held a tuft of hair and a small piece of skin, which we later— much later— had the great satisfaction of fitting back into position.

However unbelievable the actions of the leopard may appear to have been, they were in fact just what one would have expected from an animal that had been a man-eater for eight years. Avoiding the open ground, and approaching the kill under cover; removing the thorn obstruction we had erected across the blood trail he had left that morning; pulling the kill towards him into a convenient position for his meal, and rejecting those portions of the kill that we had poisoned— cyanide, of which he now had

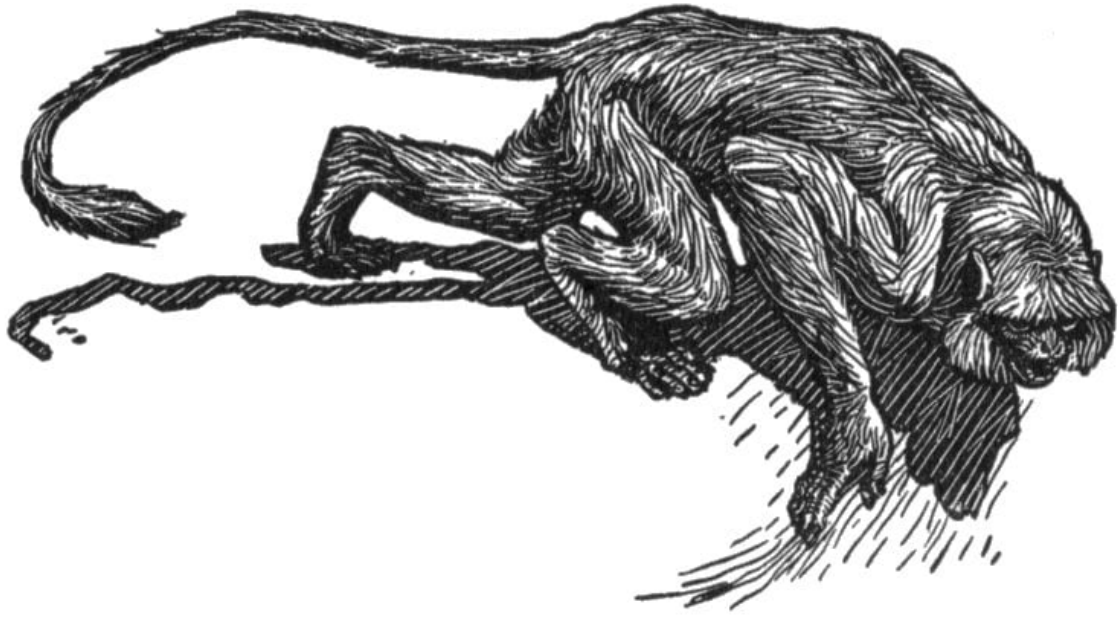
experience, has a very strong smell— were all quite normal and natural actions.

The explanation I have given for the springing of the trap is , I am convinced, correct. It was just a coincidence that the leopard happened to be directly over the trap the very moment that the additional weight of water set it off.

Having dismantled the gin-trap, and waited until the relatives had removed what remained of the old woman for cremation, we set out to walk back to Rudraprayag, leaving our men to follow us. Some time during the night the leopard had come to the mango tree, for we found his pug-marks near the tree where the pool of blood— now washed away by the rain— had been, and we followed these pug-marks down the track to the pilgrim road and four miles along the road to the gate of the Inspection Bungalow where, after scratching up the ground at the base of one of the pillars of the gate, he had gone on down the road for another mile to where my old friend the packman was camped, one of whose goats he had wantonly killed.

I need not tell those of you who have carried a sporting rifle in any part of the world that all these many repeated failures and disappointments, so far from discouraging me, only strengthened my determination to carry on until that great day or night came when, having discarded poisons and traps, I would get an opportunity of using my rifle as rifles were intended to be used, to put a bullet truly and accurately into the man-eater's body.





## *A Lesson in Caution*

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**I** HAVE NEVER AGREED WITH those sportsmen who attribute all their failures in big-game hunting to their being Jonahs.

The thoughts of a sportsman, whether they be pessimistic or whether they be optimistic, sitting waiting for an animal, cannot in any conceivable way influence the actions of the animal he is endeavouring to shoot or, maybe, to photograph.

We are apt to forget that the hearing and sight of wild animals, and especially of those animals that depend exclusively on these senses not only for food but also for self-preservation, are on a plane far and away above that of civilized human beings, and that there is no justification for us to assume that because we cannot hear or see the movements of our prospective quarry, our quarry cannot hear or see our movements. A wrong estimation of the intelligence of animals, and the inability to sit without making any sound or movement for the required length of time, is the cause of all failures when sitting up for animals. As an example of the acute sense

of hearing of carnivores, and the care it is necessary to exercise when contact with one of them is desired, I will relate one of my recent experiences.

On a day in March, when the carpet of dry leaves on the ground recorded the falling of every dead leaf and the movements of the smallest of the birds that feed on the ground, I located in some very heavy undergrowth the exact position of a tiger I had long wished to photograph, by moving a troop of langurs in the direction in which I suspected the tiger to be lying up. Seventy yards from the tiger there was an open glade, fifty yards long and thirty yards wide. On the edge of the glade, away from the tiger, there was a big tree overgrown with creepers that extended right up to the topmost branches; twenty feet from the ground the tree forked in two. I knew that the tiger would cross the glade in the late afternoon, for the glade lay directly between him and his *sambhar* kill which I had found early that morning. There was no suitable cover near the kill for the tiger to lie up in during the day, so he had gone to the heavy undergrowth where the langurs had located him for me.

It is often necessary, when shooting or photographing tigers and leopards on foot, to know the exact position of one's quarry, whether it be a wounded animal that one desires to put out of its misery or an animal that one wants to photograph, and the best way of doing this is by enlisting the help of birds or animals. With patience, and with a knowledge of the habit of the bird or animal the sportsman desires to use, it is not difficult to get a particular bird or animal to go in the required direction. The birds most suitable for this purpose are red jungle-fowl, peafowl, and white-capped babblers, and of animals the most suitable are kakars and langurs.

The tiger I am telling you about was unwounded and it would have been quite easy for me to go into the undergrowth and find him myself, but in doing so I should have disturbed him and defeated my own purposes, whereas by using the troop of langurs and knowing what their reactions would be on sighting the tiger— if he happened to be in the undergrowth—I was able to get the information I wanted without disturbing the tiger.

Very carefully I stalked the tree I have referred to, and avoiding contact with the creepers, the upper tendrils and leaves of which might have been visible from where the tiger was lying, I climbed to the fork, where I had a comfortable seat and perfect concealment. Getting out my 16-mm ciné-camera I made an opening to the screen of leaves in front of me just big enough to photograph through, and having accomplished all this without having made a sound, I sat still. My field of vision was confined to the glade and to the jungle immediately beyond it.

After I had been sitting for an hour, a pair of bronzewing doves rose out of the jungle and went skimming over the low brushwood, and a minute or two later, and a little closer to me, a small flight of upland pipits rose off the ground and, after daintily tripping along the branches of a leafless tree, rose above the tree-tops and went off. Neither of these two species of birds has any alarm call, but I knew from their behaviour that the tiger was afoot and that they had been disturbed by him. Minutes later I was slowly turning my eyes from left to right scanning every foot of ground visible to me, when my eyes came to rest on a small white object, possibly an inch or two square, immediately in front of me, and about ten feet from the edge of the glade. Focusing my eyes on this stationary object for a little while, I then continued to scan the bushes to the limit of my field of vision to the right, and then back again to the white object.

I was now convinced that this object had not been where it was for more than a minute or two before I had first caught sight of it, and that it could not be anything other than a white mark on the tiger's face. Quite evidently the tiger had heard me when I was approaching or climbing the tree, though I had done this in thin rubber shoes without making as far as I was aware any sound, and when the time had come for him to go to his kill he had stalked, for a distance of seventy yards over dry leaves, the spot he had pinpointed as the source of some suspicious sound. After lying for half an hour without making any movement, he stood up, stretched himself, yawned, and, satisfied that he had nothing to fear, walked out into the glade. Here he stood, turning his head first to the right and then to the left, and then crossed the glade, passing right under my tree on his way to his kill.



When in my wanderings through the jungles I see the machans that have been put up for the purpose of shooting carnivores, and note the saplings that have been felled near by to make the platform, the branches that have been cut to give a clear view; and see the litter and debris left lying about, and consider the talking and noise that must have accompanied these operations, I am not surprised when I hear people say they have sat up hundreds of times for tigers and leopards without ever having seen one of these animals, and attribute their failures to their being Jonahs.

Our failure to bag the man-eater up to that date was not due to our having done anything we should not have done, or left undone anything we should have done. It could only be attributed to sheer bad luck. Bad luck that had prevented my receiving the electric light in time; that had given Ibbotson cramps in both legs; that had made the leopard eat an overdose of cyanide; and, finally, that had made the men drop the gin-trap and break the one tooth that mattered. So when Ibbotson returned to Pauri, after our failure to kill the leopard over the body of his seventy-year-old victim, I was full of hope, for I considered my chance of shooting the leopard as good as they were on the first day I arrived at Rudraprayag, and in fact better than they had then been, for I now knew the capabilities of the animal I had to deal with.

One thing was causing me a lot of uneasiness and much heart-searching, and that was confining the man-eater to one bank of the river. However I looked at it, it did not appear to be right that the people on the left bank of the Alaknanda should be exposed to attacks by the leopard, while the people on the right bank were free from the risk of such attacks. Including the boy killed two days before our arrival, three people had recently lost their lives on the left bank, and others might meet with a like fate, and yet to open the two bridges and let the leopard cross over to the right bank would add an hundredfold to my difficulties, which were already considerable, and would not benefit Garhwal as a whole, for the lives of the people on the right bank of the river were just as valuable as the lives of the people on the left bank; so, very reluctantly, I decided to keep the bridges closed. And here I should like to pay my tribute to the people— numbering many thousands— living on the left bank of the river who, knowing that the

closing of the bridges was confining the activities of the dread man-eater to their area, never once, during the months I closed the bridges, removed the barriers themselves, or asked me to do so.

Having decided to keep the bridges closed, I sent a man to warn the villagers of their danger, and myself carried the warning to as many villages as time and my ability to walk permitted of my doing. No one whom I talked with on the roads and in the villages ever expressed one word of resentment at the leopard having been confined to their area, and everywhere I went I was offered hospitality and speeded on my way with blessings, and I was greatly encouraged by the assurances from both men and women— who did not know but what they might be the man-eater's next victim— that it was no matter for regret that the leopard had not died yesterday, for surely it would die today or, maybe, tomorrow.





## *A Wild Boar Hunt*

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**T**HE OLD PACKMAN HAD ARRIVED at the thorn enclosure late the previous evening. He was packing salt and gur from the bazaar at Hardwar to the villages beyond Badrinath, and as his flock of sheep and goats was heavily laden and the last march had been a long one, he had arrived too late at the thorn enclosure to repair the weak places in it, with the result that several of the goats had strayed out of the enclosure and one of them the leopard had killed, close to the road, during the early hours of the morning. The barking of his dogs had awakened him, and when it got light, he saw his best goat— a beautiful steel-grey animal nearly as large as

a Shetland pony— lying dead near the road, wantonly killed by the man-eater.

The behaviour of the man-eater during the previous night showed the extent to which the habits of a leopard change when it has become a man-eater and has lived in close association with human beings over a long period of years.

It was reasonable to assume that the man-eater had received a great shock, and a great fright, by being caught in the gin-trap; his having carried the heavy trap for ten yards and the angry way in which he had roared were in fact proof of this; and one would have expected him, the moment he got out of the trap, to have retired to some secluded spot as far removed from human habitation as possible, and to have remained there until he was again hungry, which he would not be for several days. But, so far from doing this, he had quite evidently remained in the vicinity of the kill, and after watching us climb into the *machan* and giving us time to go to sleep, had come to investigate; fortunately for us, Ibbotson had taken the precaution to protect the *machan* by putting wire-netting all round it, for it is not an unheard-of thing for man-eating leopards to kill people who are sitting up trying to shoot them. At the present time there is a man-eating leopard in the Central Provinces that has— at different times— killed and eaten four Indian sportsmen who were trying to shoot him; up to the time I last heard of this animal he had killed forty human beings, and owing to his habit of eating his would-be slayers, he was living a very peaceful and undisturbed life, varying his human diet with game and domestic animals.

After his visit to the mango tree, our man-eater went along the village path to its junction with the track. Here, where we had found the pool of blood, he had turned to the right and gone down the track for a mile, and then along the pilgrim road for another four miles and into the most densely populated part of the area in which he was operating. On arrival at Rudraprayag, he had gone through the main street of the bazaar, and half a mile farther on had scratched up the ground at the gate of the Inspection Bungalow. The rain of the previous night had softened the clay surface of the road, and on the soft clay the pug-marks of the leopard showed up

clearly; and from them it was possible to see that the leopard's encounter with the gin-trap had not resulted in injury to any of his limbs.

After breakfast I took up the tracks at the gate and followed them to the packman's camp. From a bend in the road, a hundred yards from the camp, the leopard had caught sight of the goats that had strayed from the enclosure, and crossing from the outer to the inner edge of the road and creeping along under shelter of the hill he had stalked the grazing animals and, after killing the steel-grey goat but without even troubling to drink its blood, had returned to the road.

In the thorn enclosure, guarding the dead goat and the neatly stacked pile of packs, were the packman's two sheep-dogs, tethered to stout pegs with short lengths of heavy chain. These big, black, and powerful dogs that are used by packmen throughout our hills are not accredited sheep—dogs in the same sense that sheep-dogs in Great Britain and in Europe are. On the march the dogs keep close to heel, and their duties— which they perform very efficiently— start when camp is made. At night they guard the camp against wild animals— I have known two of them to kill a leopard— and during the day and while the packmen are away grazing the flock they guard the camp against all intruders. A case is on record of one of these dogs having killed a man who was attempting to remove a pack from the camp it had been left to guard.

I picked up the tracks of the leopard where he returned to the road after killing the goat, and followed them through Golabrai and for a mile farther on, to where a deep ravine crosses the road, up which he had gone. The distance the leopard had covered from the mango tree to the ravine was about eight miles. This long and seemingly aimless walk away from a kill was in itself a thing no ordinary leopard would under any circumstances have undertaken, nor would an ordinary leopard have killed a goat when he was not hungry.

A quarter of a mile beyond the ravine the old packman was sitting on a rock by the side of the road, spinning wool and watching his flock, which were grazing on the open hillside. When he had dropped his spinning-stick

and wool into the capacious pocket in his blanket robe and accepted a cigarette, he asked if I had come past his camp. When I told him I had done so and that I had seen what the evil spirit had done, and added that it would be wise to sell his dogs to camelmén on his next visit to Hardwar, for it was quite evident that they were lacking in courage, he nodded his head as one in agree-with what he heard. Then he said, 'Sahib, even we old hands are apt at times to make mistakes, and suffer for them, even as I have this night suffered by losing my best goat. My dogs have the courage of tigers, and are the best dogs in all Garhwal, and it is an insult to them for you to say they are only fit to be sold to camelmén. My camp as you doubtless observed, is very close to the road, and I feared that if by chance anyone came along the road by night, my dogs might do him an injury so I chained them up outside the thorn enclosure instead of leaving them loose, as is my wont. You have seen the result; but do not blame the dogs, sahib, for in their efforts to save my goat their collars have bitten deep into their necks, and made wounds that will take many days to heal.'

While we were talking, an animal appeared on the crest of the hill on the far side of the Ganges. From its colour and size, I at first thought it was a Himalayan bear, but when it started to come down the hill towards the river, I saw it was a big wild boar. The pig was followed by a pack of village pye dogs, who in turn were followed by a rabble of boys and men, all armed with sticks of varying size. Last of all came a man carrying a gun. As this man crested the hill he raised his piece and we saw a puff of smoke, and a little later heard the dull report of a muzzle-loading gun. The only living things within range of the gun were the boys and men, but as none of them dropped out of the race, the sportsman appeared to have missed them.

The pig had a long grassy slope before him, with an odd bush dotted here and there, and below the grass slope was some broken ground, and below that again a dense belt of brushwood which extended right down to the river.

On the rough broken ground the pig lost his lead, and pig and pye dogs disappeared into the brushwood together. Next minute all the dogs, with the exception of the big light-coloured animal that had been leading the pack,

dashed back out of the brushwood. When the boys and men arrived they appeared to urge the dogs to re-enter the cover, but this— after apparently having recently seen what the pig could do with his tusks— they were unwilling to do. The man with the gun then arrived, and was immediately surrounded by the boys and men.

To us sitting on our elevated grandstand with the river flowing between, the scene being enacted on the farther hill was a silent picture, for the noise of the water deadened sound and all we had heard was the dull report of the muzzle-loader.

The sportsman was apparently as reluctant to enter the cover as the dogs were, for presently he broke away from his companions and sat down on a rock, as if to say, 'I have done my bit, now you do yours'. Confronted with this double dilemma— for the dogs, even after some of them had been beaten, stoutly refused to face the pig— first the boys and then the men started to throw stones into the brushwood.

While this was going on, we saw the pig emerge from the lower end of the brushwood on to a narrow strip of sand. With a few quick steps he came out into the open, stood perfectly still for a few seconds, took a few more steps, stopped again, and then with a little run plunged into the river. Pigs— the wild variety— are exceptionally good swimmers, and they do not cut their throats with their hooves while swimming, as is generally believed.

The current in the river was strong, but there is no bigger-hearted animal than our wild pig, and when I last saw the old boar he had been washed down the river a quarter of a mile, but was swimming strongly and was nearing our bank, which I have no doubt he reached safely.

'Was the pig within range of your rifle, sahib?' asked the packman.

'Yes,' I replied, 'the pig was within range, but I have not brought a rifle to Garhwal to shoot pigs that are running for their lives, but to shoot what you think is an evil spirit, and what I know is a leopard.'

‘Have it your own way,’ he rejoined; ‘and now, as you are going, and we may never meet again, take my blessings with you, and time will prove whether you or I am right.’

I regret I never saw the packman again, for he was a grand old man, as proud as Lucifer, and as happy as the day was long, when leopards were not killing his best goats and when the courage of his dogs was not being questioned.







## *Vigil on a Pine Tree*

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**I**BBOTSON RETURNED TO PAURI NEXT DAY, and the following morning, when I was visiting the villages on the hill to the east of Rudraprayag, I found the tracks of the man-eater on a path leading out of a village in which the previous night he had tried to break open the door of a house in which there was a child suffering from a bad cough. On following the tracks for a couple of miles they led me to the shoulder of the mountain where, some days previously, Ibbotson and I had sat up over the calling goat which the leopard had later killed.

It was still quite early, and as there was a chance of finding the leopard basking on one of the rocks in this considerable area of broken ground, I lay on a projecting rock that commanded an extensive view. It had rained the previous evening—thus enabling me to track the leopard—and washed the haze out of the atmosphere. Visibility was at its best and the view from the projecting rock was as good as could be seen in any part of the world where mountains rise to a height of twenty-three thousand feet. Immediately below me was the beautiful valley of the Alaknanda, with the river showing as a gleaming silver ribbon winding in and out of it. On the hill beyond the river, villages were dotted about, some with only a single thatched hut, and

others with long rows of slate-roofed houses. These row buildings are in fact individual homesteads, built one against the other to save expense and to economize space, for the people are poor and every foot of workable land in Garhwal is needed for agriculture.

Beyond the hills were rugged rocks cliffs, down which avalanches roar in winter and early spring, and beyond and above the cliffs were the eternal snows, showing up against the intense blue sky as clear as if cut out of white cardboard. No more beautiful or peaceful scene could be imagined, and yet when the sun, now shining on the back of my head, set on the far side of the snow mountains, terror— terror which it is not possible to imagine until experienced— would grip, as it had done for eight long years, the area I was now overlooking.

I had been lying on the rock for an hour when two men came down the hill, on their way to the bazaar. They were from a village about a mile farther up the hill that I had visited the previous day, and they informed me that a little before sunrise they had heard a leopard calling in this direction. We discussed the possibilities of my getting a shot at the leopard over a goat, and as at that time I had no goats of my own, they offered to bring me one from their village and promised to meet me where we were standing, two hours before sunset.

When the men had gone I looked round for a place where I could sit. The only tree on the whole of this part of the mountain was a solitary pine. It was growing on the ridge close to the path down which the men had come, and from under it a second path took off and ran across the face of the mountain skirting the upper edge of the broken ground, where I had recently been looking for the leopard. The tree commanded an extensive view, but it could be difficult to climb, and would afford little cover. However, as it was the only tree in the area, I had no choice, so decided I would try it.

The men were waiting for me with a goat when I returned at about 4 p.m., and when, in reply to their question where I intended sitting, I pointed to the pine, they started laughing. Without a rope ladder, they said, it would

not be possible to climb the tree; and further, if I succeeded in climbing the tree without a ladder, and carried out my intention of remaining out all night, I should have no protection against the man-eater, to whom the tree would offer no obstacle. There were two white men in Garhwal— Ibbotson was one of them— who had collected birds' eggs when boys, and both of whom could climb the tree; and as there is no exact equivalent in Hindustani for 'waiting until you come to a bridge before crossing it', I let the second part of the men's objection go unanswered, contenting myself by pointing to my rifle.

The pine was not easy to climb, for there were no branches for twenty feet, but once having reached the lowest branch, the rest was easy. I had provided myself with a long length of cotton cord, and when the men had tied my rifle to one end of it, I drew it up and climbed to the top of the tree, where the pine-needles afforded most cover.

The men had assured me that the goat was a good caller, and after they tied it to an exposed root of the tree they set off for their village promising to return early next morning. The goat watched the men out of sight, and then started to nibble the short grass at the foot of the tree. The fact that it had not up to then called once did not worry me, for I felt sure that it would presently feel lonely and that it would then do its share of the business of the evening, and if it did it while it was still night, from my elevated position I should be able to kill the leopard long before it got anywhere near the goat.

When I climbed the tree the shadows cast by the snow mountains had reached the Alaknanda. Slowly these shadows crept up the hill and passed me, until only the top of the mountain glowed with red light. As this glow faded, long streamers of light shot up from the snow mountains where the rays of the setting sun were caught and held on a bank of clouds as soft and as light as thistledown. Everyone who has eyes to see a sunset— and the number, as you might have observed, is regrettably few— thinks that the sunsets in his particular part of the world are the best ever. I am no exception, for I too think that there are no sunsets in all the world to compare with ours, and a good second are the sunsets in northern

Tanganyika, where some quality in the atmosphere makes snow-capped Kilimanjaro, and the clouds that are invariably above it, glow like molten gold in the rays of the setting sun. Our sunsets in the Himalayas are mostly red, pink, or gold. The one I was looking at the evening from my seat on the pine tree was rose pink, and the white shafts of light, starting as spear-points from valleys in the cardboard snows, shot through the pink clouds and, broadening, faded out in the sky overhead.

The goat, like many human beings, had no interest in sunsets, and after nibbling the grass within reach, scratched a shallow hole for itself, lay down, curled up, and went to sleep. Here was a dilemma. I had counted on the animal now placidly sleeping below me to call up the leopard, and not once since I had first seen it had it opened its mouth, except to nibble grass, and now, having made itself comfortable, it would probably sleep throughout the night. To have left the tree at that hour in an attempt to return to the bungalow would have added one more to the number who deliberately commit suicide, and as I had to be doing something to kill the man-eater, and as— in the absence of a kill— one place was as good as another, I decided to stay where I was, and try to call up the leopard myself.

If I were asked what had contributed most to my pleasure during all the years that I have spent in Indian jungles, I would unhesitatingly say that I had derived most pleasure from a knowledge of the language, and the habits, of the jungle-folk. There is no universal language in the jungles; each species has its own language, and though the vocabulary of some is limited, as in the case of porcupines and vultures, the language of each species is understood by all the jungle-folk. The vocal chords of human beings are more adaptable than the vocal chords of any of the jungle-Folk, with the one exception of the crested wire-tailed drongo, and for this reason it is possible for human beings to hold commune with quite a big range of birds and animals. The ability to speak the language of the jungle-folk, apart from adding hundredfold to one's pleasure in the jungle, can, if so desired, be put to great use. One example will suffice.

Lionel Fortescue— up till recently a housemaster at Eton— and I were on a photographing and fishing tour in the Himalayas shortly after 1918,

and we arrived one evening at a Forest Bungalow at the foot of a great mountain, on the far side of which was our objective, the Vale of Kashmir. We had been marching over hard ground for many days, and as the men carrying our luggage needed a rest, we decided to halt for a day at the bungalow. Next day, while Fortescue wrote up his notes, I set out to explore the mountain and try for a Kashmir stag. I had been informed by friends who had shot in Kashmir that it was not possible to shoot one of these stags without the help of an experienced shikari, and this was confirmed by the *chowkidar* in charge of the Forest Bungalow. With the whole day before me I set out alone, after breakfast, without having the least idea at what elevation the red deer lived, or the kind of ground on which they were likely to be found. The mountain, over which there is a pass into Kashmir, is about twelve thousand feet high, and after I had climbed to a height of eight thousand a storm came on.

From the colour of the clouds I knew I was in for a hailstorm, so I selected with care a tree under which to shelter. I have seen both human beings and animals killed by hail, and by the lightning that invariably accompanies hailstorms, so rejecting the big fir trees with tapering tops I selected a small tree with a rounded top and dense foliage, and collecting a supply of dead wood and fir-cones, I built a fire, and for the hour that the thunder roared overhead and the hail lashed down, I sat at the foot of my tree safe and warm.

The moment the hail stopped the sun came out, and from the shelter of the tree I stepped into fairyland, for the hail that carpeted the ground gave off a million points of light to which every glistening leaf and blade of grass added its quota. Continuing up for another two or three thousand feet, I came on an outcrop of rock, at the foot of which was a bed of blue mountain poppies. The stalks of many of these, the most beautiful of all wild flowers in the Himalayas, were broken, even so these sky-blue flowers standing in a bed of spotless white were a never-to-be-forgotten sight.

The rocks were too slippery to climb, and there appeared to be no object in going to the top of the hill, so keeping to the contours I went to the left, and after half a mile through a forest of giant fir trees I came to a grassy

slope which, starting from the top of the hill, extended several thousand feet down into the forest. As I came through the trees towards this grassy slope I saw on the far side of it an animal standing on a little knoll, with its tail towards me. From illustrations seen in game books I knew the animal was a red Kashmir deer, and when it raised its head, I saw it was a hind.

On my side of the grassy slope, and about thirty yards from the edge of the forest, there was a big isolated rock some four feet high; the distance between this rock and the knoll was about forty yards. Moving only when the deer was cropping the grass, and remaining still each time she raised her head, I crept up to the shelter of the rock. The hind was quite obviously a sentinel, and from the way she looked to her right each time she raised her head, I knew she had companions, and the exact direction in which these companions were. To approach any nearer over the grass without being seen was not possible. To re-enter the forest and work down from above would not have been difficult but would have defeated my purpose, for the wind was blowing down the hill. There remained the alternative of re-entering the forest and skirting round the lower end of the grass slope, but this would take time and entail a stiff climb. I therefore finally decided to remain where I was and see if these deer—which I was seeing for the first time—would react in the same way as cheetaland *sambhar* do to the call of a leopard, of which I knew there was at least one on the mountain, for I had seen its scratch-marks earlier in the day. With only one eye showing, I waited until the hind was cropping the grass, and then gave the call of a leopard.

At the first sound of my voice the hind swung round and, facing me, started to strike the ground with her forefeet. This was a warning to her companions to be on the alert, but those companions whom I wanted to see would not move until the hind called, and this she would not do until she saw the leopard. I was wearing a brown tweed coat, and projecting a few inches of my left shoulder beyond the rock I moved it up and down. The movement was immediately detected by the hind who, taking a few quick steps forward, started to call; the danger she had warned her companions of was in sight, and it was now safe for them to join her. The first to come was a yearling, which, stepping daintily over the hail-covered ground, ranged

itself along side the hind; the yearling was followed by three stags, who in turn were followed by an old hind. The entire herd, numbering six in all, were now in full view at a range of thirty-five yards. The hind was still calling, while the others, with ears alternately held rigid or feeling forward and backward for sound and wind direction, were standing perfectly still and gazing into the forest behind me. My seat on the melting hail was uncomfortable and wet, and to remain inactive longer would possibly result in a cold. I had seen a representative herd of the much-famed Kashmir deer, and I had heard a hind call, but there was one thing more that I wanted. That was, to hear a stag call; so I again projected a few inches of my shoulder beyond the rock, and had the satisfaction of hearing the stags, the hinds, and the yearling calling in different pitched keys.

My pass permitted me to shoot one stag, and for all I knew one of the stags might have carried a record head, but though I had set out that morning to look for a stag, and procure meat for the camp, I now realized that I was in no urgent need of a trophy. In any case the stag's meat would probably be tough so, instead of using the rifle, I stood up, and six of the most surprised deer in Kashmir vanished out of sight, and a moment later I heard them crashing through the undergrowth on the far side of the knoll.

It was now time for me to retrace my steps to the bungalow, and I decided to go down the grassy slope and work through the lighter forest at the foot of the mountain. The slope was at an angle that lent itself to an easy lope, provided care was taken to see that every step was correctly placed. I was running in the middle of the hundred-yard open ground and had gone about six hundred yards when I caught sight of a white object, standing on a rock at the edge of the forest on the left-hand side of the slope, and about three hundred yards below me. A hurried glance convinced me that the white object was a goat, that had probably been lost in the forest. We had been without meat for a fortnight and I had promised Fortescue that I would bring something back with me, and there was my opportunity. The goat had seen me, and if I could disarm suspicion would possibly let me pass close enough to catch it by the legs; so as I loped along I edged to the left, keeping the animal in sight out of the corner of my eyes. Provided the animal stayed where it was, no better place on all the mountain could have

been found on which to catch it, for the flat rock, at the very edge of which it was standing, jutted out into the slope, and was about five feet high. Without looking directly at it, and keeping up a steady pace, I ran past the rock and, as I did so, made a sweep with my left hand for its forelegs. With a sneeze of alarm the animal reared up, avoiding my grasp, and when I pulled up clear of the rock and turned round, I saw to my amazement that the animal I had mistaken for a white goat was an albino musk-deer. With only some ten feet between us the game little animal was standing its ground and sneezing defiance at me. Turning away I walked down the hill for fifty yards, and when I looked back, the deer was still standing on the rock, possibly congratulating itself on having frightened me away. When some weeks later I related the occurrence to the Game Warden of Kashmir he expressed great regret at my not having shot the deer, and was very anxious to know the exact locality in which I had seen it, but as my memory for places, and my description of localities, is regrettably faulty; I do not think that particular albino musk-deer is gracing any museum.

Male leopards are very resentful of intrusion of others of their kind in the area they consider to be their own. True, the man-eater's territory extended over an area of five hundred square miles in which there were possibly many other male leopards; still, he had been in this particular area for several weeks, and might very reasonably consider it his own. And again, the mating season was only just over, and the leopard might mistake my call for the call of a female in search of a mate, so waiting until it was quite dark I called and, to my surprise and delight, was immediately answered by a leopard some four hundred yards below and a little to the right.

The ground between us was strewn with great rocks and overgrown with matted thornbushes, and I knew the leopard would not come in a straight line towards me, and that he would probably skirt round the broken ground and come up a subsidiary ridge to the one my tree was on; this I found, when next he called, that he was doing. Five minutes later I located his call as coming from the path that, starting from my tree, ran across the face of the hill, about two hundred yards away. This call I answered, to give the leopard direction. Three, or it may have been four, minutes later, he called again from a distance of a hundred yards.



It was a dark night and I had an electric torch lashed to the side of my rifle, and my thumb on the push button. From the root of the tree the path ran in a straight line for fifty yards, to where there was a sharp bend in it. It would not be possible for me to know when or where to direct the beam of the torch on this part of the path, so I should have to wait until the leopard was on the goat.

Just beyond the bend, and only sixty yards away, the leopard again called, and was answered by another leopard far up the mountain-side. A complication as unexpected as it was unfortunate, for my leopard was too close now for me to call, and as he had last heard me from a distance of two hundred yards he would naturally assume that the coy female had removed herself farther up the hill and was calling to him to join her there. There was, however, just a possibility of his continuing along the path to its junction with the path coming down the hill, in which case he would be sure to kill the goat, even if he had no use for it. But the goat's luck was in, and mine out, for the leopard cut across the angle formed by the two paths, and the next time he called he was a hundred yards farther from me, and a hundred yards nearer his prospective coaxing mate. The calling of the two leopards drew nearer and nearer together, and finally stopped. After a long period of silence the caterwauling of these two giant cats came floating down to me from where I judged the grassland ended and the dense forest began.

The leopard's luck was unfortunately in, in more ways than one, not least of all because it was dark, for leopards when courting are very easy to shoot. The same can be said of tigers, but the sportsman who goes on foot to look for courting tigers should be quite sure that he wants to see them, for a tigress— never a tiger— is very sensitive at these times, and quite understandably so, for males of the cat tribe are rough in their courting, and do not know how sharp their claws are.

The leopard had not died, nor would he die that night, but may be he would die the next day, or the day after, for his sands were running out; and so for a long moment I thought were mine, for without any warning a sudden blast of wind struck the tree, and my heels and my head changed

their relative position with the land of Garhwal. For seconds I thought it impossible for the tree to regain its upright position, or for me to retain contact with it. When the pressure eased, the tree and I got back to where we were before the wind struck us, and fearing that worse might follow, I hurriedly tied the rifle to a branch, to have the use of both hands. The pine had possibly withstood many wind-storms equally bad, if not worse, but never with a human being on it to add weight and increase wind-pressure. When the rifle was safe, I climbed out on to one branch after another, and broke off all the tassels of pine-needles that I could reach. It may only have been my imagination, but after I had lightened the tree it did not appear to heel over as dangerously as it had at first done. Fortunately the pine was comparatively young and supple, and its roots firm set, for it was tossed about like a blade of grass for an hour and then, as suddenly as it had started, the wind died down. There was no possibility of the leopard returning, so, after I had smoked a cigarette, I followed the goat into the land of dreams.

As the sun was rising a cooe brought me back to within fifty feet of earth, and under the tree were my two companions of the previous evening, reinforced by two youths from their village. When they saw that I was awake they asked whether I had heard the leopards during the night, and what had happened to the tree, and were hugely amused when I told them I had had a friendly conversation with the leopards, and that having nothing else to do I had amused myself by breaking the branches of the tree. I then asked them if by chance they had noticed that there had been some little wind during the night, on which one of the youths answered, 'A little wind, sahib! Such a big wind has never been known, and it has blown away my hut!' To which his companion rejoined, 'That is no matter for regret, sahib, for Sher Singh has long been threatening to rebuild his hut, and the wind has saved him the trouble of dismantling the old one.'





## *My Night of Terror*

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FOR SEVERAL DAYS AFTER MY EXPERIENCE on the pine tree I lost touch with the man-eater. He did not return to the broken ground and I found no trace of him, or of the female who had saved his life, in the miles of forest I searched on the high ground above the cultivated land. In these forests I was more at home, and if the leopards had been anywhere in them I should have been able to find them, for there were birds and animals in the forest that would have helped me.

The female, being restless, was quite evidently straying far from her home when she heard me call from the top of the pine tree, and on being joined by the male had gone back to her own area, accompanied by the mate I had helped her to find. The male would presently return alone, and as the precautions now being taken by the people on the left bank were making it difficult for him to procure a human kill, he would probably try to cross over to the right bank of the Alaknanda, so for the next few nights I mounted guard on the Rudraprayag bridge.

There were three approaches to the bridge on the left bank, the one from the south passing close to the bridge chowkidar's house, and on the fourth

night I heard the leopard killing the chowkidar's dog; a friendly nondescript little beast that used to run out and greet me every time I passed that way. The dog seldom barked, but that night it had been barking for five minutes when suddenly the bark ended in a yelp, followed by the shouting of the chawkidar from inside his house, after which there was silence. The thornbushes had been removed from the archway and the bridge was open, yet though I lay with finger on trigger for the rest of the night the leopard did not try to cross.

After killing the dog and leaving it lying on the road, the leopard, as I found from his tracks next morning, came to the tower. Five more steps in the direction in which he was going would have brought him out on the bridge, but those five steps he did not take. Instead he turned to the right, and after going a short distance up the footpath towards the bazaar, he returned and went up the pilgrim road to the north. A mile up the road I lost his tracks.

Two days later I received a report that a cow had been killed the previous evening, seven miles up the pilgrim road. It was suspected that the cow had been killed by the man-eater, for the previous night—the night the dog had been killed—the leopard had tried to break open the door of a house close to where, the next evening, the cow had been killed. On the road I found a number of men waiting for me who, knowing that the walk up from Rudraprayag would be a hot one, had very thoughtfully provided a dish of tea. While we sat in the shade of a mango tree and smoked, and I drank the dish of tea, they told me that the cow had not returned with the herd the previous evening, and that it had been found between the road and the river when a search had been made for it that morning. They also told me of the many hairbreadth escapes each of them had had from the man-eater during the past eight years. I was very interested to learn from them that the leopard had only adopted his present habit of trying—and in many cases succeeding—to break open the doors of houses three years previously, and that before he had been content to take people who were outside their houses, or from houses the doors of which had been left open. 'Now,' they said, 'the *shaitan* has become so bold that sometimes when he has not been

able to break down the door of a house, he has dug a hole through the mud wall, and got at his victims in the way.'

To those who do not know our hill-people, or understand their fear of the supernatural, it will seem incredible that a people renowned for their courage, and who have won the highest awards on the field of battle, should permit a leopard to break open a door, or to dig a hole in a wall of a house, in which in many cases there must have been men with axes, kukris, or, even in some cases, firearms at hand. I know of only one case in all those eight long years in which resistance was offered to the man-eater, and in that case the resister was a woman. She was sleeping alone in a house, the door of which she had left unfastened; this door, as in the case of the door of the house occupied by the woman who escaped with a lacerated arm, opened inwards. On entering the room the leopard seized the woman's left leg, and as it dragged her across the room, the woman's hand came in contact with a *gandesha*— a tool used for chopping chaff for cattle— and with this the woman dealt the leopard a blow. The leopard did not release his hold, but backed out of the room, and as it did so either the woman pushed the door, or else this happened accidentally. Whichever it may have been, with the woman on one side of the door and the leopard on the other, the leopard exerted its great strength and tore the limb from the woman's body. Mukandi Lal, at that time Member for Garhwal in the United Provinces Legislative Council, who was on an electioneering tour, arrived in the village the following day and spent a night in the room, but the leopard did not return. In a report to the Council, Mukandi Lal stated that seventy-five human beings had been killed by the leopard in the course of that one year, and he asked the Government to launch a vigorous campaign against the man-eater.

Accompanied by one of the villagers to show me the way, and by Madho Singh, I went down to the kill. The cow had been killed in a deep ravine a quarter of a mile from the road and a hundred yards from the river. On one side of the ravine there were big rocks with dense brushwood between, and on the other side of the ravine there were a few small trees, none of which was big enough to sit in. Under the trees, and about thirty yards from the

kill, there was a rock with a little hollow at the base of it, so in the hollow I decided to sit.

Both Madho Singh and the villager objected very strongly to my sitting on the ground, but as this was the first animal kill I had got since my arrival at Rudraprayag in a place where it was reasonable to expect the leopard to come at an early hour— about sundown— I overruled their objections, and sent them back to the village.

My seat was dry and comfortable, and with my back to the rock and a small bush to conceal my legs I was confident the leopard would not see me, and that I should be able to kill it before it was aware of my presence. I had provided myself with a torch and a knife, and with my good rifle across my knees I felt that in this secluded spot my chances of killing the leopard were better than any I had yet had.

Without movement and with my eyes on the rocks in front of me I sat through the evening, each second bringing the time nearer when the undisturbed and unsuspecting leopard would for a certainty return to his kill. The time I had been waiting for had come, and was passing. Objects near at hand were beginning to get blurred and indistinct. The leopard was a little later in coming than I had expected him to be, but that was not worrying me, for I had a torch, and the kill was only thirty yards from me, and I would be careful over my shot and make quite sure that I did not have a wounded animal to deal with.

In the deep ravine there was absolute silence. The hot sun of the past few days had made the dead leaves on the bank on which I was sitting as dry as tinder. This was very reassuring, for it was now dark and whereas previously I had depended on my eyes for protection I now had to depend on my ears, and with thumb on the button of the torch and finger on trigger I was prepared to shoot in any direction in which I heard the slightest sound.

The non-appearance of the leopard was beginning to cause me uneasiness. Was it possible that from some concealed place among the

rocks he had been watching me all these hours, and was he now licking his lips in anticipation of burying his teeth in my throat?— for he had long been deprived of human flesh. In no other way could I account for his not having come, and if I were to have the good fortune to leave the ravine on my feet, my ears would have to serve me now as they had never served me before.

For what seemed like hours I strained my ears and then, noticing it getting darker than it should have been, I turned my eyes up to the sky and saw that a heavy bank of clouds was drifting across the sky, obscuring the stars one by one. Shortly thereafter big drops of rain started to fall, and where there had been absolute and complete silence there was now sound and movement all round— the opportunity the leopard had been waiting for had come. Hastily taking off my coat I wound it round my neck, fastening it securely in place with the sleeves. The rifle was now useless but might help to cause a diversion, so transferring it to my left hand I unsheathed my knife and got a good grip of it with my right hand. The knife was what is called an Afridi stabbing knife, and I devoutly hoped it would serve me as well as it had served its late owner, for when buying it from the Government store at Hangu on the North-west Frontier, the Deputy Commissioner had drawn my attention to a label attached to it and to three notches on the handle, and said it had figured in three murders. Admittedly a gruesome relic, but I was glad to have it in my hand, and I clutched it tight while the rain lashed down.

Leopards, that is ordinary forest leopards, do not like rain and invariably seek shelter, but the man-eater was not an ordinary leopard, and there was no knowing what his likes or dislikes were, or what he might or might not do.

When Madho Singh was leaving he asked how long I intended sitting up, and I had answered 'Until I have shot the leopard,' so I could expect no help from him, and of help I was at that time in urgent need. Should I go or should I remain were the questions that were troubling me, and one option was as unattractive as the other. If the leopard up to then had not seen me it would be foolish to give my position away, and possibly fall across him on

the difficult ground I should have to negotiate on my way up to the pilgrim road. On the other hand to remain where I was for another six hours—momentarily expecting to have to fight for my life with an unfamiliar weapon— would put a strain on my nerves which they were not capable of standing; so getting to my feet and shouldering the rifle, I set off.

I had not far to go, only about five hundred yards, half of which was over wet clay and the other half over rocks worn smooth by bare feet and the hooves of cattle. Afraid to use the torch for fear of attracting the man-eater, and with one hand occupied with the rifle and the other with the knife, my body made as many contacts with the ground as my rubber-shod feet. When I eventually reached the road I sent a full-throated cooee into the night, and a moment later I saw a door in the village far up the hillside open and Madho Singh and his companion emerge, carrying a lantern.

When the two men joined me Madho Singh said he had had no uneasiness about me until the rain started, and that he had then lit the lantern, and sat with his ear against the door listening. Both men were willing to accompany me back to Rudraprayag, so we set out on our seven-mile walk, Bachi Singh leading, Madho Singh carrying the lantern following, and I bringing up the rear. When I returned next day I found the kill had not been touched, and on the road I found the tracks of the man-eater. What time had elapsed between our going down the road and the man-eater following us, it was not possible to say.

When I look back on that night, I look back on it as my night of terror. I have been frightened times without number, but never have I been frightened as I was that night when the unexpected rain came down and robbed me of all my defences, and left me for protection a murderer's knife.







## *Leopard Fights Leopard*

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**A**FTER FOLLOWING US TO RUDRAPRAYAG THE leopard went down the pilgrim road through Golabrai, past the ravine up which he had gone a few days previously, and then up a rough track which the people living on the hills to the east of Rudraprayag use as a short cut on their way to and from Hardwar.

The pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath is seasonal, and the commencement of the pilgrimage and its duration depend in the one case on the melting and in the other on the falling of snow in the upper reaches of the high mountains in which these two shrines are situated. The High Priest of Badrinath temple had a few days previously sent the telegram that is eagerly awaited by good Hindus throughout the length and breadth of India, announcing that the road was open, and for the past few days pilgrims in small numbers had been passing through Rudraprayag.

During the past few years the man-eater had killed several pilgrims on the road, and it appeared to be his more or less regular habit while the

pilgrim season lasted to go down the road to the extent of his beat, and then circle round through the villages on the hills to the east of Rudraprayag, and rejoin the Road anything up to fifteen miles above Rudraprayag. The time taken for this round trip varied, but on an average I had seen the leopard's tracks on the stretch of road between Rudraprayag and Golabrai once in every five days, so on my way back to the Inspection

Bungalow I selected a place from where I could overlook the road, and for the next two nights sat in great comfort on a hayrick, without however seeing anything of the leopard.

I received no news of the man-eater from outlying villages for two days, and on the third morning I went down the pilgrim road for six miles to try to find out if he had recently visited any of the villages in the direction. From this twelve-mile walk I returned at midday, and while I was having a late breakfast two men arrived and reported that a boy had been killed the previous evening at Bhainswara, a village eighteen miles south-east of Rudraprayag.

The intelligence system introduced by Ibbotson was working splendidly. Under this system cash rewards, on a graduated scale, were paid for information about all kills in the area in which the man-eater was operating. These rewards, starting with two rupees for a goat and working up to twenty rupees for a human being, were keenly contested for, and so ensured our receiving information about all kills in the shortest time possible.

When I put ten rupees into the hands of each of the men who had brought me news about the boy, one of them offered to accompany me back to Bhainswara to show me the way, while the other said he would stay the night at Rudraprayag as he had recently had fever and could not do another eighteen miles that day. I finished breakfast while the men were telling me their tale, and a little before 1 p.m. I set off, taking only my rifle, a few cartridges, and a torch with me. As we crossed the road near the Inspection Bungalow and started up the steep hill on the far side of it, my companion informed me we had a very long way to go, adding that it would not be safe for us to be out after dark, so I told him to walk ahead and set the pace. I

never— if I can help it— walk uphill immediately after a meal, but here I had no option, and for the first three miles, in which we climbed four thousand feet, I had great difficulty in keeping up with my guide. A short stretch of comparatively flat ground at the end of the three miles gave me back my wind, and after that I walked ahead and set the pace.

On their way to Rudraprayag the two men had told the people in the villages they had passed through about the kill, and of their intention to try and persuade me to accompany them back to Bhainswara. I do not think that anyone doubted that I would answer to the call, for at every village the entire population were waiting for me, and while some gave me their blessings, others begged me not to leave the district until I had killed their enemy.

My companion had assured me that we had eighteen miles to go, and as we crested hill after hill with deep valleys between I realized I had undertaken to walk against time eighteen of the longest and hardest miles I had ever walked. The sun was near setting when, from the crest of one of these unending hills, I saw a number of men standing on a ridge a few hundred yards ahead of us. On catching sight of us some of the men disappeared over the ridge, while others came forward to meet us. The headman of Bhainswara was among the latter, and after he had greeted me, he cheered me by telling me that his village was just over the crest of the hill, and that he had sent his son back to get tea ready.

The 14th of April 1926 is a date that will long be remembered in Garhwal, for it was on that day that the man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag killed his last human victim. On the evening of that day a widow and her two children, a girl aged nine and a boy aged twelve, accompanied by a neighbour's son aged eight, went to a spring a few yards from Bhainswara village to draw water for the preparation of their evening meal.

The widow and her children occupied a house in the middle of a long row of homesteads. These homesteads were double-storied, the low-ceilinged ground floor being used for the storage of grain and fuel, and the first floor for residences. A veranda four feet wide ran the entire length of

the building, and short flights of stone steps flanked by walls gave access to the veranda, each flight of steps being used by two families. A flagged courtyard, sixty feet wide and three hundred feet long, bordered by a low wall, extended along the whole length of the building.

The neighbour's son was leading as the party of four approached the steps used by the widow and her children, and as the boy started to mount the steps he saw an animal, which he mistook for a dog, lying in an open room on the ground floor adjoining the steps; he said nothing about the animal at the time, and the others apparently did not see it. The boy was followed by the girl, the widow came next, and her son brought up the rear. When she was half-way up the short flight of stone steps, the mother heard the heavy brass vessel her son was carrying crash on the steps and go rolling down them; reprimanding him for his carelessness, she set her own vessel down on the veranda and turned to see what damage her son had done. At the bottom of the steps she saw the overturned vessel. She went down and picked it up, and then looked round for her son. As he was nowhere in sight she assumed he had got frightened and had run away, so she started calling to him.

Neighbours in adjoining houses had heard the noise made by the falling vessel and now, hearing the mother calling to her son, they came to their doors and asked what all the trouble was about. It was suggested that the boy might be hiding in one of the ground-floor rooms, so as it was now getting dark in these rooms, a man lit a lantern and came down the steps towards the woman, and as he did so he saw drops of blood on the flagstones where the woman was standing. At the sound of the man's horrified ejaculation other people descended into the courtyard, among whom was an old man who had accompanied his master on many shooting expeditions. Taking the lantern from the owner's hand, this old man followed the blood trail across the courtyard and over the low wall. Beyond the wall was a drop of eight feet into a yam field; here in the soft earth were the splayed-out pug-marks of a leopard. Up to that moment no one suspected that the boy had been carried off by a man-eater, for though everyone had heard about the leopard it had never previously been within ten miles of their village. As soon as they realized what had happened the

women began screaming and while some men ran to their houses for drums, others ran for guns— of which there were three in the village and in a few minutes pandemonium broke out. Throughout the night drums were beaten and guns were fired. At daylight the boy's body was recovered, and two men were dispatched to Rudraprayag to inform me.

As I approached the village in company with the headman, I heard the wailing of a woman mourning her dead. It was the mother of the victim, and she was the first to greet me. Even to my unpractised eye it was apparent that the bereaved mother had just weathered one hysterical storm and was heading for another, and as I lack the art of dealing with people in this condition I was anxious to spare the woman a recital of the events of the previous evening; but she appeared to be eager to give me her version of the story, so I let her have her way. As the story unfolded itself it was apparent that her object in telling it was to ventilate her grievance against the men of the village for not having run after the leopard and rescued her son 'as his father would have done had he been alive'. In her accusation against the men I told her she was unjust, and in her belief that her son could have been rescued alive, I told her she was wrong. For when the leopard clamped his teeth round the boy's throat, the canine teeth dislocated the head from the neck and the boy was already dead before the leopard carried him across the courtyard, and nothing the assembled men— or anyone else— could have done would have been of any use.

Standing in the courtyard drinking the tea that had thoughtfully been provided for me, and noting the hundred or more people who were gathered round, it was difficult to conceive how an animal the size of a leopard had crossed the courtyard in daylight without being seen by any of the people who must have been moving about at that time, or how its presence had gone undetected by the dogs in the village.

I climbed down the eight-foot wall that the leopard carrying the boy had jumped down, and followed the drag across the yam field, down another wall twelve feet high, and across another field. At the edge of this second field there was a thick hedge of rambler roses, four feet high. Here the leopard had released his hold on the boy's throat, and after searching for an

opening in the hedge and not finding one, he had picked the boy up by the small of the back and, leaping the hedge, gone down a wall ten feet high on the far side. There was a cattle track at the foot of this third wall and the leopard had only gone a short distance along it when the alarm was raised in the village. The leopard had then dropped the boy on the cattle track and gone down the hill. He was prevented from returning to his kill by the beating of drums and the firing of guns which had gone on all night in the village.

The obvious thing for me to have done would have been to carry the body of the boy back to where the leopard had left it, and to have sat over it there. But here I was faced with two difficulties— the absence of a suitable place in which to sit, and my aversion to sitting in an unsuitable place.

The nearest tree, a leafless walnut, was three hundred yards away, and was therefore out of the question, and quite frankly I lacked the courage to sit on the ground. I had arrived at the village at sundown; it had taken a little time to drink the tea, hear the mother's story, and trail the leopard, and there was not sufficient daylight left for me to construct a shelter that would have given me even the semblance of protection; therefore if I sat on the ground I should have to sit just anywhere, not knowing from which direction the leopard would come, and knowing full well that if the leopard attacked me I should get no opportunity of using the one weapon with which I was familiar, my rifle, for when in actual contact with an unwounded leopard or tiger it is not possible to use firearms.

When after my tour of inspection I returned to the courtyard, I asked the headman for a crowbar, a stout wooden peg, a hammer, and a dog chain. With the crowbar I prised up one of the flagstones in the middle of the courtyard, drove the peg firmly into the ground, and fastened one end of the chain to it. Then with the help of the headman I carried the body of the boy to the peg and chained it there.

The working of the intangible force which sets a period to life, which one man calls Fate and another calls kismet, is incomprehensible. During the past few days this force had set a period to the life of a breadwinner, leaving

his family destitute; had ended in a very painful way the days of an old lady who after a lifetime of toil was looking forward to a few short wars of comparative comfort; and now, had cut short the life of this boy who, by the look of him, had been nurtured with care by his widowed mother. Small wonder then that the bereaved mother should, in between her hysterical crying, be repeating over and over and over again, ‘What crime, *Parmeshwar*, has my son, who was loved by all, committed that on the threshold of life he has deserved death in this terrible way?’

Before prising up the flagstone, I had asked for the mother and her daughter to be taken to a room at the very end of the row of buildings. My preparations completed, I washed at the spring and asked for a bundle of straw, which I laid on the veranda in front of the door of the house vacated by the mother.

Darkness had now fallen. Having asked the assembled people to be as silent during the night as it was possible for them to be and sent them to their respective homes, I took up my position on the veranda, where by lying prone on my side and heaping a little straw in front, I could get a clear view of the kill without much chance of being seen myself.

In spite of all the noise that had been made the previous night, I had a feeling that the leopard would return, and that when he failed to find his kill where he had left it, he would come to the village to try to secure another victim. The ease with which he had got his first victim at Bhainswara would encourage him to try again, and I started my vigil with high hopes.

Heavy clouds had been gathering all the evening, and at 8 p.m., when all the village sound— except the wailing of the woman— were hushed, a flash of lightning followed by a distant roll of thunder heralded an approaching storm. For an hour the storm raged, the lightning being so continuous and brilliant that had a rat ventured into the courtyard I should have seen and probably been able to shoot it. The rain eventually stopped but, the sky remaining overcast, visibility was reduced to a few inches. The time had now come for the leopard to start from wherever he had been

sheltering from the storm, and the time of his arrival would depend on the distance of that place from the village.

The woman had now stopped wailing, and in all the world there appeared to be no sound. This was as I had hoped, for all I had to warn me that the leopard had come were my ears, and to help them I had used the dog chain instead of a rope.

The straw that had been provided for me was as dry as tinder and my ears, straining into the black darkness, first heard the sound when it was level with my feet— something was creeping, very stealthily creeping, over the straw on which I was lying. I was wearing an article of clothing called shorts, which left my legs bare in the region of my knees. Presently, against this bare skin, I felt the hairy coat of an animal brushing. It could only be the man-eater, creeping up until he could lean over and get a grip of my throat. A little pressure now on my left shoulder— to get a foothold— and then, just as I was about to press the trigger of the rifle to cause a diversion, a small animal jumped down between my arms and my chest. It was a little kitten, soaking wet, that had been caught out in the storm and, finding every door shut, had come to me for warmth and protection.

The kitten had hardly made itself comfortable inside my coat, and I was just beginning to recover from the fright it had given me, when from beyond the terraced fields there was some low growling which gradually grew louder, and then merged into the most savage fight I have ever heard. Quite evidently the man-eater had returned to the spot where the previous night he had left his kill, and while he was searching for it, in not too good a temper, another male leopard who looked upon this particular area as his hunting-ground, had accidentally come across him and set on him. Fights of the nature of the one that was taking place in my hearing are very unusual, for carnivores invariably keep to their own areas, and if by chance two of the same sex happen to meet, they size up each other's capabilities at a glance, and the weaker gives way to the stronger.

The man-eater, though old, was a big and a very powerful male, and in the five hundred square miles he ranged over there was possibly no other



male capable of disputing his rule, but here at Bhainswara he was a stranger and a trespasser, and to get out of the trouble he had brought on himself he would have to fight for his life. And this he was undoubtedly doing.

My chance of getting a shot had now gone, for even if the man-eater succeeded in defeating his attacker, his injuries would probably prevent him from taking any interest in kills for some time to come. There was even a possibility of the fight ending fatally for him, and here would indeed be an unexpected end to his career: killed in an accidental encounter by one of his own kind, when the combined efforts of the Government and the public had failed, over a period of eight years, to accomplish this end.

The first round, lasting about five minutes, was fought with unabating savagery, and was inconclusive, for at the end of it I could still hear both animals. After an interval of ten or fifteen minutes the fight was resumed, but at a distance of two to three hundred yards from where it had originally started; quite evidently the local champion was getting the better of the fight and was gradually driving the intruder out of the ring. The third round was shorter than the two that had preceded it, but was no less savage, and when after another long period of silence the fight was again resumed, the scene had receded to the shoulder of the hill, where after a few minutes it died out of hearing.

There were still six hours of darkness left; even so I knew my mission to Bhainswara had failed, and that my hope that the fight would be fought to a finish and would end in the death of the man-eater had been short-lived. In the running fight into which the contest had now degenerated the man-eater would sustain injuries, but they were not likely to reduce his craving for human flesh or impair his ability to secure it.

The kitten slept peacefully throughout the night, and as the first streak of dawn showed in the east I descended into the courtyard and carried the boy to the shed from where we had removed him, and covered him with the blanket which previously had been used for the purpose. The headman was still asleep when I knocked on his door. I declined the tea, which I knew would take some time to make, and assured him that the man-eater would

never again visit his village; and when he had promised to make immediate arrangements to have the boy carried to the burning-ghat, I set off on my long walk back to Rudraprayag.

No matter how often we fail in any endeavour, we never get used to the feeling of depression that assails us after each successive failure. Day after day over a period of months I had left the Inspection Bungalow full of hope that on this particular occasion I would meet with success, and day after day I had returned disappointed and depressed. Had my failures only concerned myself they would not have mattered, but in the task I had undertaken those failures concerned others more than they concerned me. Bad luck— for to nothing else could I attribute my failures— was being meted out to me in ever-increasing measure, and the accumulated effect was beginning to depress me and give me the feeling that I was not destined to do what I had set out to do. What but bad luck had made the man-eater drop his kill where there were no trees? And what but bad luck had made a leopard who possibly had thirty square miles in which to wander, arrive at a particular spot in those thirty miles just as the man-eater, not finding his kill where he had left it, was quite conceivably on his way to the village where I was waiting for him?

The eighteen miles had been long yesterday but they were longer today and the hills were steeper. In the villages I passed through the people were eagerly awaiting me, and though I only had bad news they did not show their disappointment. Their boundless faith in their philosophy, a faith strong enough to move mountains and very soothing to depressed feelings, that no human beings and no animals can die before their appointed time, and that the man-eater's time had not yet come, called for no explanation, and admitted of no argument.

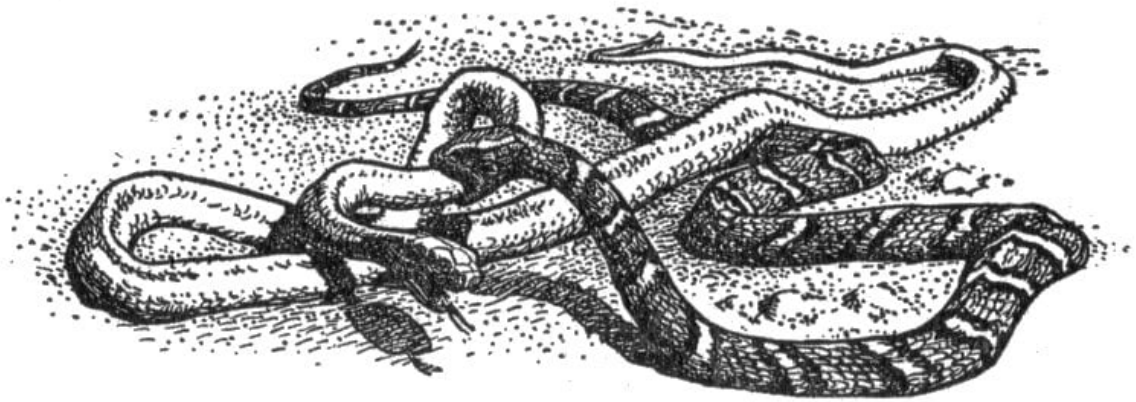
Ashamed of the depression and feeling of frustration that I had permitted to accompany me throughout the morning, I left the last village— where I had been made to halt and drink a cup of tea— greatly cheered, and as I swung down the last four miles to Rudraprayag I became aware that I was treading on the pug-marks of the man-eater. Strange how one's mental condition can dull, or sharpen, one's powers of observation. The man-eater

had quite possibly joined the track many miles farther back, and now, after my conversation with the simple village-folk and a drink of tea— I was seeing his pug-marks for the first time that morning. The track here ran over red clay which the rain had softened, and the pug marks of the man-eater showed that he was walking at his accustomed pace. Half a mile farther on he started to quicken his pace, and this pace he continued to maintain until he reached the head of the ravine above Golabrai; down this ravine the leopard had gone.

When a leopard or tiger is walking at its normal pace only the imprints of the hind feet are seen, but when the normal pace is for any reason exceeded, the hind feet are placed on the ground in advance of the forefeet, and thus the imprints of all four feet are seen. From the distance between the imprints of the fore and the hind feet it is possible to determine the speed at which an animal of the cat tribe was travelling. The coming of daylight would in this instance have been sufficient reason for the man-eater to have quickened his pace.

I had previously had experience of the man-eater's walking capabilities, but only when ranging his beat in search of food. Here he had a better reason for the long walk he had undertaken, for he was anxious to put as great a distance as possible between himself and the leopard who had given him a lesson in the law of trespass; how severe that lesson had been will be apparent from a description given later.





## *A Shot in the Dark*

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**M**EALTIMES IN INDIA VARY ACCORDING TO the season of the year and individual tastes. In most establishments the recognized times for the three principal meals are: breakfast, 8 to 9; lunch, 1 to 2; and dinner, 8 to 9. During all the months I was at Rudraprayag my mealtimes were very erratic, and contrary to the accepted belief that health depends on the composition and regularity of meals, my unorthodox and irregular meals kept me fighting fit. Porridge supped at 8 p.m., soup taken at 8 a.m., one combined meal in the day or no meal at all, appeared to have no injurious effect beyond taking a little flesh off my bones.

I had eaten nothing since my breakfast the previous day, so as I intended spending the night out I had a nondescript meal on my return from Bhainswara, and after an hour's sleep and a bath set off for Golabrai to warn the *pundit* who owned the pilgrim shelter of the presence in his vicinity of the man-eater.

I had made friends with the *pundit* on my first arrival at Rudraprayag and I never passed his house without having a few words with him, for in addition to the many interesting tales he had to tell about the man-eater and the pilgrims who passed through Golabrai, he was one of the only two people—the woman who escaped with the lacerated arm being the other—

whom I met during my stay in Garhwal who had survived an encounter with the man-eater.

One of his tales concerned a woman who had lived in a village further down the road, and with whom he had been acquainted. After a visit to the Rudraprayag bazaar one day this woman arrived at Golabrai late in the evening, and fearing she would not be able to reach her home before dark she asked the *pundit* to let her spend the night in his shelter. This he permitted her to do advising her to sleep in front of the door of the storeroom in which he kept the articles of food purchased by the pilgrims, for, he said, she would then be protected by the room on the one side, and by the fifty or more pilgrims who were spending the night in the shelter on the other.

The shelter was a grass shed open on the side nearest the road, and boarded up on the side nearest the hill; the store-room was midway along the shed, but was recessed into the hill and did not obstruct the floor of the shed, so when the woman lay down at the door of the store-room there were rows of pilgrims between her and the road. Some time during the night one of the women pilgrims screamed out and said she had been stung by a scorpion. No lights were available, but with the help of matches the woman's foot was examined and a small scratch from which a little blood was flowing was found on her foot. Grumbling that the woman had made a lot of fuss about nothing, and that in any case blood did not flow from a scorpion sting, the pilgrims soon composed themselves and resumed their sleep.

In the morning, when the *pundit* arrived from his house on the hill above the mango tree, he saw a sari worn by hill-women lying on the road in front of the shelter, and on the sari there was blood. The *pundit* had given his friend what he considered to be the safest place in the shelter, and with fifty or more pilgrims lying all round her the leopard had walked over the sleeping people, killed the woman, and accidentally scratched the sleeping pilgrim's foot when returning to the road. The explanation given by the *pundit* as to why the leopard had rejected the pilgrims and carried off the hill-woman was that she was the only person in the shelter that night who

was wearing a coloured garment. This explanation is not convincing, and but for the fact that leopards do not hunt by scent, my own explanation would have been that of all the people in the shelter the hill-woman was the only one who had a familiar smell. Was it just bad luck, or fate, or being the only one of all the sleepers who realized the danger of sleeping in an open shed? Had the victim's fear in some inexplicable way conveyed itself to the man-eater, and attracted him to her?

It was not long after this occurrence that the *pundit* had his own encounter with the man-eater. The exact date— which could if desired be ascertained from the hospital records at Rudraprayag— is immaterial, and for the purpose of my story it will be sufficient to say that it took place during the hottest part of the summer of 1921, that is four years before I met the pundit. Late one evening of that summer ten pilgrims from Madras arrived weary and footsore at Golabrai, and expressed their intention of spending the night in the pilgrim shelter. Fearing that if any more people were killed at Golabrai his shelter would get a bad reputation, the pundit tried to persuade them to continue on for another two miles to Rudraprayag, where they would be ensured of safe accommodation. Finding that nothing he could say had any effect on the tired pilgrims, he finally consented to give them accommodation in his house, which was fifty yards above the mango-tree to which I have already drawn attention.

The pundit's house was built on the same plan as the homesteads at Bhainswara; a low ground-floor room used for storage of fuel, and a first-floor room used as a residence. A short flight of stone steps gave access to a narrow veranda, the door of the residential room being opposite to the landing at the top of the steps.

After the *pundit* and the ten guests that had been forced on him had eaten their evening meal, they locked themselves into the room, which was not provided with any means of ventilation. The heat in the room was stifling, and fearing that he would be suffocated the *pundit* some time during the night opened the door, stepped outside, and stretched his hands to the pillars on either side of the steps supporting the roof of the veranda. As he did so and filled his lungs with the night air, his throat was gripped as in a vice.

Retaining his hold on the pillars, he got the soles of his feet against the body of his assailant and with a desperate kick tore the leopard's teeth from his throat, and hurled it down the steps. Then, fearing that he was going to faint, he took a step sideways and supported himself by putting both hands on the railing of the veranda, and the moment he did so the leopard sprang up from below and buried its claws in his left forearm. The downward pull was counteracted by the railing on which the *pundit* had the palm of his hand, and the weight of the leopard caused its sharp claws to rip through the flesh of his arm until they tore free at his wrist. Before the leopard was able to spring a second time, the pilgrims, hearing the terrifying sounds the *pundit* was making in his attempts to breathe through the gap torn in his throat, dragged him into the room and bolted the door. For the rest of that long hot night the *pundit* lay gasping for breath and bleeding profusely, while the leopard growled and clawed at the frail door, and the pilgrims screamed with terror.

At daylight the pilgrims carried the *pundit*, now mercifully unconscious, to a Kalakamli hospital at Rudraprayag, where for three months he was fed through a silver tube inserted in his throat. After an absence of over six months he returned to his home in Golabrai, broken in health and with his hair turned grey. Photographs were taken five years later, and scarcely show the leopard's teeth-marks on the left side of the *pundit*'s face and in his throat, and its claw-marks on his left arm, though they were still clearly visible.

In his conversations with me the *pundit* always referred to the man-eater as an evil spirit, and after the first day, when he had asked me what proof I could give him in face of his own experience that evil spirits could not assume material form, I also, to humour him, referred to the man-eater as 'the evil spirit'.

On arrival at Golabrai that evening I told the *pundit* of my fruitless visit to Bhainswara, and warned him to take extra precautions for his safety and for the safety of any pilgrims who might be staying in his shelter; for the evil spirit, after its long excursion into the hills, had now returned to the vicinity.

That night, and for the following three nights, I sat on the haystack, keeping a watch on the road; and on the fourth day Ibbotson returned from Pauri.

Ibbotson always infused new life into me, for his creed, like that of the locals, was that no one was to blame if the man-eater had not died yesterday, for surely it would die today or maybe tomorrow. I had a lot to tell him, for though I had corresponded with him regularly— extracts from my letters being embodied in his reports to the Government, and by them made available to the press— I had not been able to give him all the details which he was now eager to hear. On his part Ibbotson also had a lot to tell me; this concerned the clamour being made in the press for the destruction of the man-eater, and the suggestion that sportsmen from all parts of India be encouraged to go to Garhwal to assist in killing the leopard. This press campaign had resulted in Ibbotson receiving only one inquiry, and only one suggestion. The inquiry was from a sportsman who said that, if arrangements for his travel, accommodation, food, and so on, were made to his satisfaction, he would consider whether it was worth his while to come to Golabrai; and the suggestion was from a sportsman in whose opinion the speediest and easiest way of killing the leopard was to paint a goat over with arsenic, sew up its mouth to prevent it licking itself, and then tie it up in a place where the leopard would find and eat it, and so poison itself.

We talked long that day, reviewing my many failures in minutest detail, and by lunch-time, when I had told Ibbotson of the leopard's habit of going down the road between Rudraprayag and Golabrai on an average once in every five days, I convinced him that the only hope I now had of shooting the leopard was by sitting over the road for ten nights, for, as I pointed out to him, the leopard would be almost certain to use the road at least once during the period. Ibbotson consented to my plan very reluctantly, for I had already sat up many nights and he was afraid that another ten on end would be too much for me. However, I carried my point, and then told Ibbotson that if I did not succeed in killing the leopard within the stipulated time, I would return to Naini Tal and leave the field free for any new-comers who might consider it worth their while to take my place.



That evening Ibbotson accompanied me to Golabrai and helped me to put up a *machan* in the mango tree a hundred yards from the pilgrim shelter and fifty yards below the pundit's house. Immediately below the tree, and in the middle of the road, we drove a stout wooden peg, and to this peg we tethered a goat with a small bell round its neck. The moon was nearly at its full; even so, the high hill to the east of Golabrai only admitted of the moon lighting up the deep Ganges valley for a few hours, and if the leopard came while it was dark the goat would warn me of his approach.

When all our preparations had been made Ibbotson returned to the bungalow, promising to send two of my men for me early next morning. While I sat on a rock near the foot of the tree and smoked and waited for night to close in, the *pundit* came and sat down beside me; he was a bhakti and did not smoke. Earlier in the evening he had seen us building the machan, and he now tried to dissuade me from sitting all night in the tree when I could sleep comfortably in bed. Nevertheless, I assured him I would sit all that night in the tree, and for nine nights thereafter, for if I was not able to kill the evil spirit I could at least guard his house and the pilgrim shelter from attack by all enemies. Once during the night a *kakar* barked on the hill above me, but thereafter the night was silent. At sunrise next morning two of my men arrived, and I set off for the Inspection Bungalow, examining the road as I went for pug-marks, and leaving the men to follow with my rug and rifle.

During the following nine days my programme did not vary. Leaving the bungalow accompanied by two men in the early evening, I took up my position in the *machan* and sent the men away in time for them to get back to the bungalow before dusk. The men had strict orders not to leave the bungalow before it was fully light, and they arrived each morning as the sun was rising on the hills on the far side of the river and accompanied me back to the bungalow.

During all those ten nights the barking of the *kakar* on the first night was all that I heard. That the man-eater was still in the vicinity we had ample proof, for twice within those ten nights it had broken into houses and carried off, on the first occasion, a goat and, on the second occasion, a

sheep. I found both kills with some difficulty for they had been carried a long distance, but neither had been of any use to me as they had been eaten out. Once also during those ten nights the leopard had broken down the door of a house which, fortunately for the inmates, had two rooms, the door of the inner room being sufficiently strong to withstand the leopard's onslaught.

On return to the bungalow after my tenth night in the mango tree, Ibbotson and I discussed our future plans. No further communications had been received from the sportsman, no one else had expressed a desire to accept the Government's invitation, and no one had responded to the appeals made by the press. Neither Ibbotson nor I could afford to spend more time at Rudraprayag; Ibbotson because he had been away from his headquarters for ten days and it was necessary for him to return to Pauri to attend to urgent work; and I because I had work to do in Africa and had delayed my departure for three months and could not delay it any longer. Both of us were reluctant to leave Garhwal to the tender mercies of the man-eater and yet, situated as we were, it was hard to decide what to do. One solution was for Ibbotson to apply for leave, and for me to cancel my passage to Africa and cut my losses. We finally agreed to leave the decision over for that night, and to decide on our line of action next morning. Having come to this decision I told Ibbotson I would spend my last night in Garhwal in the mango tree.

Ibbotson accompanied me on that eleventh, and last, evening, and as we approached Golabrai we saw a number of men standing on the side of the road, looking down into a field a little beyond the mango tree; the men had not seen us and before we got up to them they turned and moved off towards the pilgrim shelter. One of them however looked back, and seeing me beckoning retraced his steps. In answer to our questions he said he and his companions had for an hour been watching a great fight between two big snakes down in the field. No crops appeared to have been grown there for a year or more, and the snakes had last been seen near the big rock in the middle of the field. There were smears of blood on this rock, and the man said they had been made by the snakes, which had bitten each other and were bleeding in several places. Having broken a stick from a nearby

bush, I jumped down into the field to see if there were any holes near the rock, and as I did so I caught sight of the snakes in a bush just below the road. Ibbotson had in the meantime armed himself with a stout stick, and as one of the snakes tried to climb up on to the road he killed it. The other one disappeared into a hole in the bank from where we were unable to dislodge it. The snake Ibbotson had killed was about seven feet long and of a uniform light straw colour, and on its neck it had several bites. It was not a rat snake, and as it had very pronounced poison fangs we concluded it was some variety of hoodless cobra. Cold-blooded creatures are not immune to snake poison, for I have seen a frog bitten by a cobra die in a few minutes, but I do not know if snakes of the same variety can poison each other, and the one that escaped into the hole may have died in a few minutes or it may have lived to die of old age.

After Ibbotson left, the *pundit* passed under my tree on his way to the pilgrim shelter, carrying a pail of milk. He informed me that a hundred and fifty pilgrims, who had arrived during the day, were determined to spend the night in his shelter and that he was powerless to do anything about it. It was then too late for me to take any action, so I told him to warn the pilgrims to keep close together and not on any account to move about after dark. When he hurried back to his house a few minutes later, he said he had warned the pilgrims accordingly.

In a field adjoining the road, and about a hundred yards from my tree, there was a thorn enclosure in which a packman— not my old friend— earlier in the evening had penned his flock of goats and sheep. With the packman were two dogs who had barked very fiercely at us as we came down the road, and at Ibbotson after he left me to go back to the bungalow.

The moon was a few days past the full, and the valley was in darkness when, a little after 9 p.m., I saw a man carrying a lantern leave the pilgrim shelter and cross the road. A minute or two later, he recrossed the road and on gaining the shelter extinguished the lantern and at the same moment the packman's dogs started barking furiously. The dogs were unmistakably barking at a leopard, which quite possibly had seen the man with the lantern and was now coming down the road on its way to the shelter.

At first the dogs barked in the direction of the road, but after a little while they turned and barked in my direction. The leopard had now quite evidently caught sight of the sleeping goat and lain down out of sight of the dogs—which had stopped barking—to consider his next move. I knew that the leopard had arrived, and I also knew that he was using my tree to stalk the goat, and the question that was tormenting me as the long minutes dragged by was whether he would skirt round the goat and kill one of the pilgrims, or whether he would kill the goat and give me a shot.

During all the nights I had sat in the tree I adopted a position that would enable me to discharge my rifle with the minimum of movement and in the minimum of time. The distance between the goat and my machan was about twenty feet, but the night was so dark under the dense foliage of the tree that my straining eyes could not penetrate even this short distance, so I closed them and concentrated on my hearing.

My rifle, to which I had a small electric torch attached, was pointing in the direction of the goat, and I was just beginning to think that the leopard—-assuming it was the man-eater— had reached the shelter and was selecting a human victim, when there was a rush from the foot of the tree, and the goat's bell tinkled sharply. Pressing the button of the torch I saw that the sights of the rifle were aligned on the shoulder of a leopard, and without having to move the rifle a fraction of an inch I pressed the trigger, and as I did so the torch went out.

Torches in those days were not in as general use as they are now, and mine was the first I had ever possessed. I had carried it for several months and never had occasion to use it, and I did not know the life of the battery, or that it was necessary to test it. When I pressed the button on this occasion the torch gave only one dim flash and then went out, and I was again in darkness without knowing what the result of my shot had been.

The echo of my shot was dying away in the valley when the *pundit* opened his door and called out to ask if I needed any help. I was at the time listening with all my ears for any sounds that might come from the leopard, so I did not answer him, and he hurriedly shut his door.

The leopard had been lying across the road with his head away from me when I fired, and I was vaguely aware of his having sprung over the goat and gone down the hillside, and just before the *pundit* had called I thought I heard what may have been a gurgling sound, but of this I could not be sure. The pilgrims had been aroused by my shot but, after murmuring for a few minutes, they resumed their sleep. The goat appeared to be unhurt, for from the sound of his bell I could tell that he was moving about and apparently eating the grass of which he was given a liberal supply each night.

I had fired my shot at 10 p.m. As the moon was not due to rise for several hours, and as there was nothing I could do in the meantime, I made myself comfortable, and listened and smoked.

Hours later the moon lit up the crest of the hills on the far side of the Ganges and slowly crept down into the valley, and a little later I saw it rise over the top of the hill behind me. As soon as it was overhead I climbed to the top of the tree, but found that the spreading branches impeded my view. Descending again to the machan, I climbed out on the branches spreading over the road, but from here also I found it was not possible to see down the hillside in the direction in which I thought the leopard had gone. It was then 3 a.m., and two hours later the moon began to pale. When nearby objects became visible in the light of the day that was being born in the east, I descended from the tree and was greeted by a friendly bleat from the goat.

Beyond the goat, and at the very edge of the road, there was a long low rock, and on this rock there was an inch-wide streak of blood; the leopard from which that blood had come could only have lived a minute or two, so dispensing with the precautions usually taken when following up the blood trail of carnivores, I scrambled down off the road and, taking up the trail on the far side of the rock, followed it for fifty yards, to where the leopard was lying dead. He had slid backwards into a hole in the ground, in which he was now lying crouched up, with his chin resting on the edge of the hole.

No marks by which I could identify the dead animal were visible, even so I never for one moment doubted that the leopard in the hole was the man-eater. But here was no fiend, who while watching me through the long night

hours had rocked and rolled with silent fiendish laughter at my vain attempts to outwit him, and licked his lips in anticipation of the time when, finding me off my guard for one brief moment, he would get the opportunity he was waiting for of burying his teeth in my throat. Here was only an old leopard, who differed from others of his kind in that his muzzle was grey and his lips lacked whiskers; the best-hated and the most feared animal in all India, whose only crime— not against the laws of nature, but against the laws of man— was that he had shed human blood, with no object of terrorizing man, but only in order that he might live; and who now, with his chin resting on the rim of the hole and his eyes half-closed, was peacefully sleeping his long last sleep.

While I stood unloading my rifle, one bullet from which had more than cancelled my personal score against the sleeper, I heard a cough, and on looking up saw the *pundit* peering down at me from the edge of the road. I beckoned to him and he came gingerly down the hill. On catching sight of the leopard's head he stopped, and asked in a whisper whether it was dead, and what it was. When I told him it was dead, and that it was the evil spirit that had torn open his throat five years ago, and for fear of which he had hurriedly closed his door the previous night, he put his hands together and attempted to put his head on my feet. Next minute there was a call from the road above of, 'Sahib, where are you?' It was one of my men calling in great agitation, and when I sent an answering call echoing over the Ganges, four heads appeared, and catching sight of us four men came helter-skelter down the hill, one of them swinging a lighted lantern which he had forgotten to extinguish.

The leopard had got stiff in the hole and was extracted with some little difficulty. While it was being tied to the stout bamboo pole the men had brought with them, they told me they had been unable to sleep that night and that as soon as Ibbotson's jemadar's watch showed them it was 4.30 a.m., they lit the lantern, and arming themselves with a pole and a length of rope had come to look for me, for they felt that I was in urgent need of them. Not finding me in the *machan* and seeing the goat unhurt, and the streak of blood on the rock, they concluded the man-eater had killed me, and not knowing what to do they had in desperation called to me.

Leaving the *pundit* to retrieve my rug from the machan, and give the pilgrims who were now crowding round his version of the night's happenings, the four men and I, with the goat trotting alongside, set off for the Inspection Bungalow. The goat, who had escaped with very little injury owing to my having fired the moment the leopard caught him, little knew that his night's adventure was to make him a hero for the rest of his life, and that he was to wear a fine brass collar and be a source of income to the man from whom I had purchased him, and to whom I gave him back.

Ibbotson was still asleep when I knocked on the glazed door, and the moment he caught sight of me he jumped out of bed and dashing to the door flung it open, embraced me, and next minute was dancing round the leopard which the men had deposited on the veranda. Shouting for tea, and a hot bath for me, he called for his stenographer and dictated telegrams to the Government, the press, and my sister, and a cable to Jean. Not one question had he asked, for he knew that the leopard which I had brought home at that early hour was the man-eater, so what need was there for questions? On that previous occasion— in spite of all the evidence that had been produced— I had maintained that the leopard killed in the gin-trap was not the man-eater, and on this occasion I had said nothing.

Ibbotson had carried a heavy responsibility since October of the previous year, for to him was left the answering of questions of Councillors anxious to please their constituents, of Government officials who were daily getting more alarmed at the mounting death-roll, and of a press that was clamouring for results. His position had for a long time been like that of the head of a police force who, knowing the identity of a noted criminal, was unable to prevent his committing further crimes, and for this was being badgered on all sides. Little wonder then that Ibbotson on that 2nd of May 1926 was the happiest man I had even seen, for not only was he now able to inform all concerned that the criminal had been executed, but he was also able to tell the people from the bazaars, and from the surrounding villages, and the pilgrims, all the whom were swarming into the compound of the Inspection Bungalow, that the evil spirit that had tormented them for eight long years was now dead.

After emptying a pot of tea and having a hot bath I tried to get a little sleep, but fear of a repetition of the cramps that twisted my feet, and from which I was only relieved by the vigorous ministrations of Ibbotson, brought me out of bed. Then Ibbotson and I measured the leopard, and carefully examined it. The following are the results of our measurements and of our examination.

## MEASUREMENTS

Length, between pegs : 7 feet, 6 inches

Length, over curves : 7 feet, 10 inches

[Note: these measurements were taken after the leopard had been dead twelve hours.]

## DESCRIPTION

*Colour:* Light straw.

*Hair:* Short and brittle.

*Whiskers:* None.

*Teeth:* Worn and discoloured, one canine tooth broken.

*Tongue and mouth:* Black.

*Wounds:* One fresh bullet-wound in right shoulder.

One old bullet-wound in pad of left hind foot, and part of one toe and one claw missing from same foot.

Several deep and partly-healed cuts on head.

One deep and partly-healed cut on right hind leg.

Several partly-healed cuts on tail.

One partly-healed wound on stifle of left hind leg.

I am unable to account for the leopard's tongue and mouth being black. It was suggested that this might have been caused by cyanide, but whether this was so or not I cannot say. Of the partly-healed wounds, those on the head, right hind leg, and tail were acquired in his fight at Bhainswara, and the one on the stifle of his left hind leg was the result of his having been caught in the gin-trap, for the piece of skin and tuft of hair we found in the trap fitted into this wound. The injuries on the left hind foot were the result



of the bullet fired on the bridge by the young army officer in 1921. When skinning the leopard later, I found a pellet of buckshot embedded in the skin of his chest which an Indian Christian— years later— claimed he had fired at the leopard the year it became a man-eater.

After Ibbotson and I had measured and examined the leopard it was laid in the shade of a tree, and throughout the day thousands of men, women, and children came to see it.

When the people of our hills visit an individual for any particular purpose, as for instance to show their gratitude or to express their thanks, it is customary for them not to go on their mission empty-handed. A rose, a marigold, or a few petals of either flower, suffices, and the gift is proffered in hands cupped together. When the recipient has touched the gift with the tips of the fingers of his right hand, the person proffering the gift goes through the motion of pouring the gift on to the recipient's feet, in the same manner as if his cupped hands contained water.

I have on other occasions witnessed gratitude, but never as I witnessed it that day at Rudraprayag, first at the Inspection Bungalow and later at a reception in the bazaar.

‘He killed our only son, sahib, and we being old, our house is now desolate.’

‘He ate the mother of my five children, and the youngest is but a few months old, and there is none in the home now to care for the children, or to cook the food.’

‘My son was taken ill at night and no one dared go to the hospital for medicine, and so he died.’

Tragedy upon pitiful tragedy, and while I listened, the ground around my feet was strewn with flowers.





## *Epilogue*

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THE EVENTS I HAVE NARRATED TOOK place between 1925 and 1926. Sixteen years later, in 1942, I was doing a war job in Meerut and my sister and I were invited one day by Colonel Flye to help entertain wounded men at a garden party. The men, some fifty or sixty in number, and from all parts of India, were sitting round a tennis-court just finishing a sumptuous tea, and getting to the smoking stage, when we arrived. Taking opposite sides of the court, my sister and I started to go round the circle.

The men were all from the Middle East, and, after a rest, were to be sent to their homes, some on leave, and some on discharge.

Music, in the form of a gramophone with Indian records, had been provided by Mrs Flye, and as my sister and I had been requested to stay until the party gave over—which would be in about two hours' time—we had ample time to make our circuit of the wounded men.

I had got about half-way round the circle when I came to a boy sitting in a low chair; he had been grievously wounded, and on the ground near his chair were two crutches. At my approach he very painfully slid off his chair and attempted to put his head on my feet. He was woefully light, for he had spent many months in hospital, and when I had picked him up and made him comfortable in his chair, he said: 'I have been talking with your lady sister, and when I told her I was a Garhwali, she told me who you were. I was a small boy when you shot the man-eater, and as our village is far from Rudraprayag I was not able to walk there, and my father not being strong was unable to carry me, so I had to stay at home. When my father returned he told me he had seen the man-eater, and that with his own eyes he had seen the sahib who had shot it. He also told me of the sweets that had been distributed that day—his share of which he had brought back for me—and of the great crowds he had seen. And now, sahib, I will go back to my home with great joy in my heart, for I shall be able to tell my father that with my own eyes I have seen you and, may be, if I can get anyone to carry me to

the fair that is held every year at Rudraprayag to commemorate the death of the man-eater, I shall tell all the people I meet there that I have seen and had speech with you.'

A cripple, on the threshold of manhood, returning from the wars with a broken body, with no thought of telling of brave deeds done, but only eager to tell his father that with his own eyes he had seen the man who years ago he had not had the opportunity of seeing, a man whose only claim to remembrance was that he had fired one accurate shot.

A typical son of Garhwal, of that simple and hardy hill-folk; and of that greater India, whose sons only those few who live among them are privileged to know. It is these big-hearted sons of the soil, no matter what their caste or creed, who will one day weld the contending factions into a composite whole, and make of India a great nation.

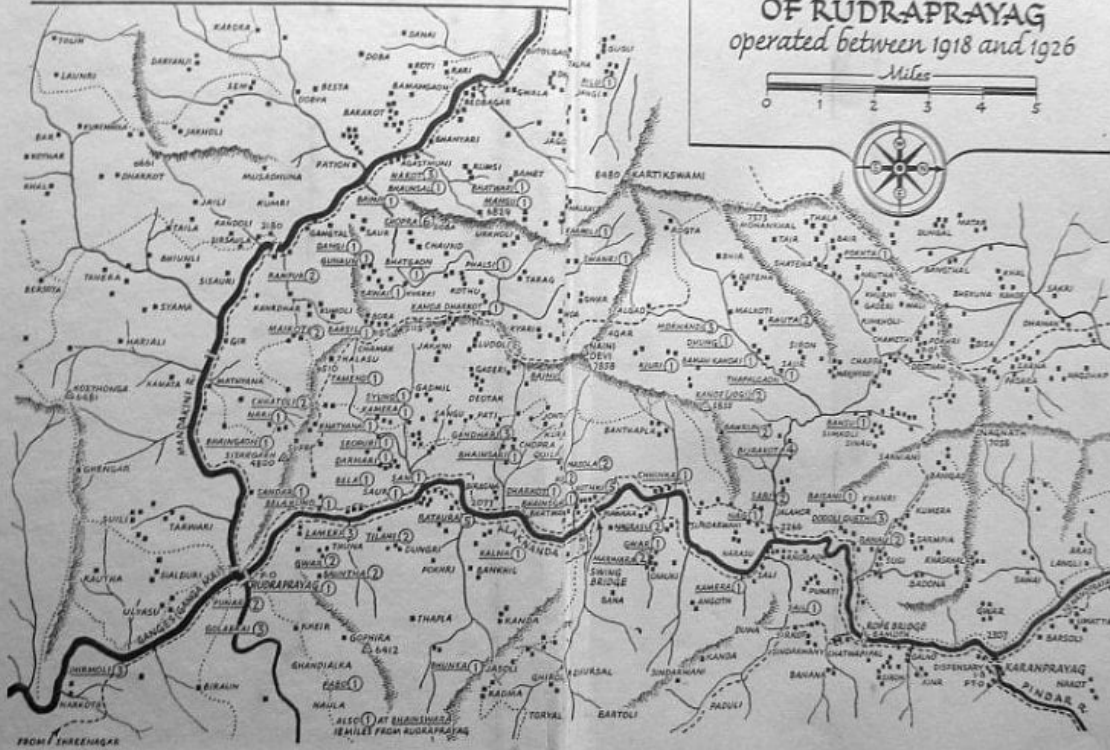


VILLAGE ..... SHANTYARI  
 RIDGE .....  
 BRIDLE ROAD .....  
 POST OFFICE ..... P.O.  
 POST & TELEGRAPH OFFICE ..... P.T.O.

RECORDED KILLS .....  
 HEIGHT (in feet) ..... 1875.6  
 FOOTPATH .....  
 INSPECTION BUNGALOW .....  
 P.T.O.

*The Area in which  
 THE MAN-EATING LEOPARD  
 OF RUDRAPRAYAG  
 operated between 1918 and 1926*

Miles  
 0 1 2 3 4 5



# MY INDIA



*By*  
JIM CORBETT

## *Dedication*

**I**F you are looking for a history of India, or for an account of the rise and fall of the British raj, or for the reason for the cleaving of the subcontinent into two mutually antagonistic parts and the effect this mutilation will have on the respective sections, and ultimately on Asia, you will not find it in these pages; for though I have spent a lifetime in the country, I lived too near the seat of events, and was too intimately associated with the actors, to get the perspective needed for the impartial recording of these matters.

In my India, the India I know, there are four hundred million people, ninety percent of whom are simple, honest, brave, loyal, hard-working souls whose daily prayer to God, and to whatever Government is in power, is to give them security of life and of property to enable them to enjoy the fruits of their labors. It is of these people, who are admittedly poor, and who are often described as 'India's starving millions', among whom I have lived and whom I love, that I shall endeavor to tell in the pages of this book, which I humbly dedicate to my friends, the poor of India.

J.C.

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## *Introduction*

HAVING read my dedication you may ask: 'Who are these poor of India that you mention?' 'What do you mean by "My India"?' The questions are justified. The world has developed the habit of using the word 'Indian' to denote an inhabitant of the great peninsula that stretches upwards of two thousand miles from north to south, and as much from east to west. Geographically the term may pass muster, but when it comes to applying it to the people themselves one should not, without further explanation, use a description whose looseness has already led to infinite misunderstanding. The four hundred million people of India are divided horizontally by race, tribe, and caste into a far greater diversity than exists in Europe, and they are cleft vertically by religious differences fully as deep as those which under any one nation from another. It was religion, not race that split the Indian Empire into Hindustan and Pakistan.

Let me; therefore, explain what I mean by the title of this book.

'My India', about which these sketches of village life and work are written, refers to those portions of a vast land which I have known from my earliest days, and where I have worked; and the simple folk whose ways and characters I have tried to depict for you are those among whom I spent the greater part of seventy years. Look at a map of India. Pick out Cape Comorin, the most southerly point of the peninsula, and run your eye straight up to where the Gangetic Plain slopes up into the foothills of the Himalayas in the north of the United Provinces. There you will find the hill station of Naini Tal, the summer seat of the Government of the United Provinces, packed from April to November with Europeans and wealthier Indians seeking escape from the heat of the plains, and occupied during the winter only by a few permanent residents, of whom most of my life I was one. Now leave this hill station and run your eye down the Ganges River on its way to the sea, past Allahabad, Benares, and Patna, till you reach Mokameh Ghat, where I labored for twenty-one years. The scenes of my sketches centre round these two points in India: Naini Tal and Mokameh Ghat.

In addition to many footpaths, Naini Tal is accessible by a motor road of which we are justly proud, for it has the reputation of being the best-aligned and the best-maintained hill road in India. Starting at the railway terminus of Kathgodam the road, in its course of twenty-two miles, passes through forests where occasionally tiger and the dread hamadryad are to be seen, and climbs 4,500 feet by easy gradients to Naini Tal. Naini Tal can best be described as an open valley running east and west, surrounded on three sides by hills, the highest of which, Cheena, rises to a height of 8,569 feet.

It is open at the end from which the motor road approaches it. Nestling in the valley is a lake a little more than two miles in circumference, fed at the upper end by a perennial spring and overflowing at the other end where the motor road terminates. At the upper and lower ends of the valley there are bazaars, and the surrounding wooded hills are dotted with residential houses, churches, schools, clubs, and hotels. Near the margin of the lake are boat houses, a picturesque Hindu temple, and a very sacred rock shrine presided over by an old Brahmin priest who has been a lifelong friend of mine.

Geologists differ in their opinion as to the origin of the lake, some attributing it to glaciers and landslides, others to volcanic action. Hindu legends, however, give the credit for the lake to three ancient sages, Atri, Pulastyas and Pulaha. The sacred book Skanda-Puran tells how, while on a penitential pilgrimage, these three sages arrived at the crest of Cheena and, finding no water to quench their thirst, dug a hole at the foot of the hill and syphoned water into it from Manasarowar, the sacred lake in Tibet. After the departure of the sages the goddess Naini arrived and took up her abode in the waters of the lake. In course of time forests grew on the sides of the excavation and, attracted by the water and the vegetation, birds and animals in great numbers made their home in the valley. Within a radius of four miles of the goddess's temple I have, in addition to other animals, seen tiger, leopard, bear, and sambhar, and in the same area identified one hundred and twenty-eight varieties of birds. Rumours of the existence of the lake reached the early administrators of this part of India, and as the hill people were unwilling to disclose the position of their sacred lake, one of these administrators, in the year 1839, hit on the ingenious plan of placing a

large stone on the head of a hill man, telling him he would have to carry it until he arrived at goddess Naini's lake. After wandering over the hills for many days the man eventually got tired of carrying the stone, and led the party who were following him to the lake. The stone alleged to have been carried by the man was shown to me when I was a small boy, and when I marked that it was a very big stone for a man to carry— it weighed about six hundred pounds— the hill man who showed it to me said, 'Yes, it is a big stone, but you must remember that in those days our people were very strong'.

Provide yourself now with a good pair of field glasses and accompany me to the top of Cheena. From here you will get a bird's-eye view of the country surrounding Naini Tal. The road is steep, but if you are interested in birds, trees, and flowers you will not mind the three-mile climb and if you arrive at the top thirsty, as the three sages did, I will show you a crystal-clear spring of coldwater to quench your thirst. Having rested and eaten your lunch, turn now to the north. Immediately below you is a deep well-wooded valley running down to the Kosi River. Beyond the river are a number of parallel ridges with villages dotted here and there; on one of these ridges is the town of Almora, and on another, the cantonment of Ranikhet. Beyond these again are more ridges, the highest of which, Dungar Buqual, rises to a height of 14,200 feet and is dwarfed into insignificance by the mighty mass of the snow-clad Himalayas.

Sixty miles due north of you, as the crow flies, is Trisul, and to the east and to the west of this imposing 23,406-foot peak the snow mountains stretch in an unbroken line for many hundreds of miles. Where the snows fade out of sight to the west of Trisul are first the Gangotri group, then the glaciers and mountains above the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath, and then Kamet made famous by Smythe.

To the east of Trisul, and set farther back, you can just see the top of Nanda Devi (25,689 feet), the highest mountain in India. To your right front is Nanda Kot, the spotless pillow of the goddess Parvati, and a little farther east are the beautiful peaks of Panch Chuli, the 'five cooking-places' used by the Pan-davas while on their way to Kailas in Tibet. At the first approach

of dawn, while Cheena and the intervening hills are still shrouded in the mantle of night, the snowy range changes from indigo blue to rose pink, and as the sun touches the peaks nearest to heaven the pink gradually changes to dazzling white. During the day the mountains show up cold and white, each crest trailing a feather of powdered snow, and in the setting sun the scene may be painted pink, gold, or red according to the fancy of heaven's artist.

Turn your back now on the snows and face south. At the limit of your range of vision you will see three cities: Bareilly, Kashipur, and Moradabad. These three cities, the nearest of which, Kashipur, is some fifty miles as the crow flies, are on the main railway that runs between Calcutta and the Punjab. There are three belts of country between the railway and the foothills: first a cultivated belt some twenty miles wide, then a grass belt ten miles wide known as the Terai, and third a tree belt ten miles wide known as the Bhabar. In the Bhabar belt, which extends right up to the foothills, clearings have been made, and on this rich fertile soil, watered by many streams, villages of varying size have been established. The nearest group of villages, Kaladhungi, is fifteen miles from Naini Tal by road, and at the upper end of this group you will see our village, Choti Haldwani, surrounded by a three-mile-long stone wall. Only the roof of our cottage, which is at the junction of the road running down from Naini Tal with the road skirting the foothills, is visible in a group of big trees. The foothills in this area are composed almost entirely of iron ore, and it was at Kaladhungi that iron was first smelted in northern India. The fuel used was wood, and as the King of Kumaon, General Sir Henry Ramsay, feared that the furnaces would consume all the forests in the Bhabar, he closed down the foundries. Between Kaladhungi and your seat on Cheena the low hills are densely wooded with sal, the trees which supply our railways with ties, or sleepers, and in the nearest fold of the ridge nestles the little lake of Khurpa Tal, surrounded by fields on which the best potatoes in India are grown.

Away in the distance, to the right, you can see the sun glinting on the Ganges, and to the left you can see it glinting on the Sarda; the distance between these two rivers where they leave the foot hills is roughly two hundred miles.

Now turn to the east and before you in the near and middle distance you will see the country described in old gazetteers as ‘the district of sixty lakes’. Many of these lakes have silted up, some in my lifetime and the only ones of any size that now remain are Naini Tal, Sat Tal, Bhim Tal, and Nakuchia Tal. Beyond Nakuchia Tal is the cone-shaped hill, Choti Kailas. The gods do not favour the killing of bird or beast on this sacred hill, and the last man who disregarded their wishes— a soldier on leave during the war— unaccountably lost his footing after killing a mountain goat and, in full view of his two companions, fell a thousand feet into the valley below.

Beyond Choti Kailas is the Kala Agar ridge on which I hunted the Chowgarh man-eating tiger for two years, and beyond this ridge the mountains of Nepal fade out of sight. Turn now to the west. But first it will be necessary for you to descend a few hundred feet and take up a new position on Deopatta, a rocky peak 7,991 feet high adjoining Cheena. Immediately below you is a deep, wide, and densely wooded valley which starts on the saddle between Cheena and Deopatta and extends through Dachouri to Kaladhungi. It is richer in flora and fauna than any other in the Himalayas, and beyond this beautiful valley the hills extend in an unbroken line up to the Ganges, the waters of which you can see glinting in the sun over a hundred miles away. On the far side of the Ganges are the Siwalik range of hills— hills that were old before the mighty Himalayas were born.



## *The Queen of the Village*

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COME with me now to one of the villages you saw in your bird's-eye view from the top of Cheena. The parallel lines you saw etched across the face of the hill are terraced fields. Some of these are no more than ten feet wide, and the stone walls supporting them are in some cases thirty feet high. The ploughing of these narrow fields, with a steep hill on one side and a big drop on the other, is a difficult and a dangerous job, and is only made possible by the use of a plough with a short shaft and of cattle that have been bred on the hills and that are in consequence small and stocky, and as sure-footed as goats. The stout hearted people, who with infinite labour have made these terraced fields, live in a row of stone houses with slate roofs bordering the rough and narrow road that runs from the Bhabar, and the plains beyond, to the inner Himalayas. The people in this village know me, for in response to an urgent telegram, which the whole village subscribed to send me, and which was carried by runner to Naini Tal for transmission, I once came hot-foot from Mokameh Ghat, where I was working, to rid them of a man-eating tiger.

The incident which necessitated the sending of the telegram took place at mid day in a field just above the row of houses. A woman and her twelve-year-old daughter were reaping wheat when a tiger suddenly appeared. As the girl attempted to run to her mother for protection the tiger struck at her, severed her head from her body, and catching the body in mid-air bounded away into the jungle adjoining the field, leaving the head near the mother's feet. Telegrams, even urgent ones, take long in transmission, and as I had to do a journey of a thousand miles by rail and road, and the last twenty miles on foot, a week elapsed between the sending of the telegram and my arrival at the village; and in the meantime the tiger made another kill.

The victim on this occasion was a woman who, with her husband and children, had lived for years in the compound of the house adjoining our home in Naini Tal. This woman, in company with several others, was cutting grass on the hill above the village when she was attacked by the

tiger, killed, and carried off in full view of her companions. The screams of the frightened women were heard in the village, and, while the women were running back to Naini Tal to report the tragedy, the men of the village assembled and with great gallantry drove away the tiger. Knowing— with an Indian's trust— that I would respond to the telegram they had sent me, they wrapped the body in a blanket and tied it to the topmost branch of a thirty-foot rhododendron tree. From the tiger's subsequent actions it was evident that he had been lying up close by and had watched these proceedings, for if he had not seen the body being put up in a tree he would never have found it, as tigers have no sense of smell.

When the women made their report in Naini Tal the husband of the dead woman came to my sister Maggie and told her of the killing of his wife, and at crack of dawn next morning Maggie sent out some of our men to make a *machan* over the kill and to sit on the *machan* until I came, for I was expected to arrive that day. Materials for making the *machan* were procured at the village and, accompanied by the villagers, my men proceeded to the rhododendron tree, where it was found that the tiger had climbed the tree, torn a hole in the blanket, and carried away the body. Again with commendable courage— for they were unarmed— the villagers and my men followed up the drag for half a mile; and on finding the partly eaten body they started to put up a *machan* in an oak tree immediately above it. Just as the *machan* was completed, a sportsman from Naini Tal, who was out on an all-day shoot, arrived quite by accident at the spot and, saying he was a friend of mine, he told my men to go away, as he would sit up for the tiger himself. So, while my men returned to Naini Tal to make their report to me— for I had arrived in the meantime— the sportsman, his gun bearer, and a man carrying his lunch basket and a lantern, took up their positions on the *machan*.

There was no moon, and an hour after dark the gun-bearer asked the sportsman why he had allowed the tiger to carry away the kill, without firing at it. Refusing to believe that the tiger had been anywhere near the kill, the sportsman lit the lantern; and as he was letting it down on a length of string, to illuminate the ground, the string slipped through his fingers and the lantern crashed to the ground and caught fire. It was the month of May,

when our forests are very dry, and with in a minute the dead grass and brushwood at the foot of the tree were burning fiercely. With great courage the sportsman shinned down the tree and attempted to beat out the flames with his tweed coat, until he suddenly remembered the man-eater and hurriedly climbed back to the machan. He left his coat, which was on fire, behind him.

The illumination from the fire revealed the fact that the Kill was indeed gone, but the sportsman at this stage had lost all interest in kills and his anxiety now was for his own safety, and for the damage the fire would do to the Government forest. Fanned by a strong wind the fire receded from the vicinity of the tree and eight hours later a heavy downpour of rain and hail extinguished it, but not before it had burnt out several square miles of forest. It was the sportsman's first attempt to make contact with a man-eater and, after his experience of first nearly having been roasted and later having been frozen, it was also his last. Next morning, while he was making his weary way back to Naini Tal by one road, I was on my way out to the village by another, in ignorance of what had happened the previous night.

At my request the villagers took me to the rhododendron tree and I was amazed to see how determined the tiger had been to regain possession of his kill. The torn blanket was some twenty-five feet from the ground, and the claw marks on the tree, the condition of the soft ground, and the broken brushwood at the foot of it, showed that the tiger had climbed and fallen off the tree at least twenty times before he eventually succeeded in tearing a hole in the blanket and removing the body.

From this spot the tiger had carried the body half a mile, to the tree on which the *machan* had been built. Beyond this point the fire had obliterated all trace of a drag but, following on the line I thought the tiger would have taken, a mile farther on I stumbled on the charred head of the woman. A hundred yards beyond this spot there was heavy cover which the fire had not reached and for hours I searched this cover, right down to the foot of the valley five miles away, without, however, finding any trace of the tiger.



(Five people lost their lives between the accidental arrivals of the sportsman at the machan, and the shooting of the tiger.) I arrived back in the village, after my fruitless search of the cover, late in the evening, and the wife of the headman prepared for me a meal which her daughters placed before me on brass plates. After a very generous, and a very welcome meal — for I had eaten nothing that day— I picked up the plates with the intention of washing them in a nearby spring. Seeing my intention the three girls ran forward and relieved me of the plates, saying, with a toss of their heads and a laugh, which it would not break their caste— they were Brahmins— to wash the plates from which the White Sadhu had eaten.

The headman is dead now and his daughters have married and left the village, but his wife is alive, and you, who are accompanying me to the village, after your bird's-eye view from Cheena, must be prepared to drink the tea, not made with water but with rich fresh milk sweetened with jaggery, which she will brew for us. Our approach down the steep hillside facing the village has been observed and a small square of frayed carpet and two wicker chairs, reinforced with *ghooral* skins, have been set ready for us. Standing near these chairs to welcome us is the wife of the headman; there is no purdah here and she will not be embarrassed if you take a good look at her, and she is worth looking at. Her hair, snow-white now, was raven-black when I first knew her, and her cheeks, which in those far-off days had a bloom on them, are now ivory-white, without a single crease or wrinkle. Daughter of a hundred generations of Brahmins, her blood is as pure as that of the ancestor who founded her line.

Pride of pure ancestry is inherent in all men, but nowhere is there greater respect for pure ancestry than there is in India. There are several different castes of people in the village this dear old lady administers, but her rule is never questioned and her word is law, not because of the strong arm of retainers, for of these she has none, but because she is a Brahmin, the salt of India's earth.

The high prices paid in recent years for field produce have brought prosperity— as it is known in India— to this hill village, and of this prosperity our hostess has had her full share The string of fluted gold beads

that she brought as part of her dowry are still round her neck, but the thin silver necklace has been deposited in the family bank, the hole in the ground under the cooking-place, and her neck is now encircled by a solid gold band. In the far-off days her ears were unadorned, but now she has number of thin gold rings in the upper cartilage, and from her nose hangs a gold ring five inches in diameter, the weight of which is partly carried by a thin gold chain looped over her right ear. Her dress is the same as that worn by all high-caste hill women: a shawl, a tight-fitting bodice of warm material, and a voluminous sprint skirt. Her feet are bare, for even in these advanced days the wearing of shoes among our hill folk denotes that the wearer is unchaste.

The old lady has now retired to the inner recesses of her house to prepare tea, and while she is engaged on this pleasant task you can turn your attention to the *bania*'s shop on the other side of the narrow road. The *bania*, too, is an old friend. Having greeted us and presented us with a packet of cigarettes he has gone back to squat cross-legged on the wooden platform on which his wares are exposed. These wares consist of the few articles that the village folk and wayfarers need in the way of atta, rice, dal, ghee, salt, stale sweets purchased at a discount in the Naini Tal bazaar, hill potatoes fit for the table of a king, enormous turnips so fierce that when eaten in public they make the onlookers' eyes water, cigarettes and matches, a tin of kerosene oil, and near the platform and within reach of his hand an iron pan in which milk is kept simmering throughout the day.

As the *bania* takes his seat on the platform his few customers gather in front of him. First is a small boy, accompanied by an even smaller sister, who is the proud possessor of one pice (A pice is worth about a farthing, but is itself made up of three smaller coins called pies. Four pice make an anna, sixteen annas a rupee), all of which he is anxious to invest in sweets. Taking the pice from the small grubby hand the *bania* drops it into an open box. Then, waving his hand over the tray to drive away the wasps and flies, he picks up a square sweet made of sugar and curds, breaks it in half and puts a piece into each eager outstretched hand.

Next comes a woman of the depressed class who has two annas to spend on her shopping. One anna is invested in atta, the coarse ground wheat that is the staple food of our hill folk, and two pice in the coarsest of the three qualities of dal exposed on the stall. With the remaining two pice she purchases a little salt and one of the fierce turnips and then, with a respectful salaam to the *bania*, for he is a man who commands respect, she hurries off to prepare the midday meal for her family.

While the woman is being served the shrill whistles and shouts of men herald the approach of a string of pack mules, carrying cloth from the Moradabad hand looms to the markets in the interior of the hills. The sweating mules have had a stiff climb up the rough road from the foothills. A pice is worth about a farthing, but is itself made up of three smaller coins called pies. Four pice make an anna, sixteen annas a rupee and while they are having a breather the four men in charge have sat down on the bench provided by the *bania* for his customers and are treating themselves to a cigarette and a glass of milk. Milk is the strongest drink that has ever been served at this shop, or at any other of the hundreds of wayside shops throughout the hills, for, except for those few who have come in contact with what is called civilization, our hill men do not drink.

Drinking among women, in my India, is unknown. No daily paper has ever found its way into this village, and the only news the inhabitants get of the outside world is from an occasional trip into Naini Tal and from wayfarers, the best-informed of whom are the packmen. On their way into the hills they bring news of the distant plains of India, and on their return journey a month or so later they have news from the trading centers where they sell their wares.

The tea the old lady has prepared for us is now ready. You must be careful how you handle the metal cup filled to the brim, for it is hot enough to take the skin off your hands. Interest has now shifted from the packmen to us, and whether or not you like the sweet, hot liquid you must drink every drop of it, for the eyes of the entire village, whose guest you are, are on you; and to leave any dregs in your cup would mean that you did not consider the drink good enough for you.

Others have attempted to offer recompense for hospitality but we will not make this mistake, for these simple and hospitable people are intensely proud, and it would be as great an insult to offer to pay the dear old lady for her cup of tea as it would have been to have offered to pay the *bania* for his packet of cigarettes. So, as we leave this village, which is only one of the many thousands of similar villages scattered over the vast area viewed through your good field glasses from the top of Cheena, where I have spent the best part of my life, you can be assured that the welcome we received on arrival, and the invitation to return soon, are genuine expressions of the affection and goodwill of the people in my India for all who know and understand them.



## *Kunwar Singh*

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**K**UNWAR SINGH was by caste a Thakur, and the headman of Chandni Chauk village. Whether, he was a good or a bad headman I do not know. What endeared him to me was the fact that he was the best and the most successful poacher in Kaladhungi, and a devoted admirer of my eldest brother Tom, my boyhood's hero.

Kunwar Singh had many tales to tell of Tom, for he had accompanied him on many of his *shikar* expeditions, and the tale I like best, and that never lost anything in repetition, concerned an impromptu competition between brother Tom and a man by the name of Ellis, whom Tom had beaten by one point the previous year to win the B.P.R.A. gold medal for the best rifle-shot in India.

Tom and Ellis, unknown to each other, were shooting in the same jungle near Garuppu, and early one morning, when the mist was just rising above the tree tops, they met on the approach to some high ground overlooking a wide depression in which, at that hour of the morning, deer and pig were always to be found. Tom was accompanied by Kunwar Singh, while Ellis was accompanied by a *shikari* from NainiTal named Budhoo, whom Kunwar Singh despised because of his low caste and his ignorance of all matters connected with the jungles.

After the usual greetings, Ellis said that, though Tom had beaten him by one miserable point on the rifle range, he would show Tom that he was a better game shot; and he suggested that they should each fire two shots to prove the point. Lots were drawn and Ellis, winning, decided to fire first. A careful approach was then made to the low ground, Ellis carrying the -450 Martini-Henry rifle with which he had competed at the B.P.R.A. meeting, while Tom carried a -400 D.B. express by Westley-Richards of which he was justly proud, for few of these weapon shad up to that date arrived in India. The wind may have been wrong, or the approach careless. Anyway,

when the competitors topped the high ground, no animals were in sight on the low ground.

On the near side of the low ground there was a strip of dry grass beyond which the grass had been burnt, and it was on this burnt ground, now turning green with sprouting new shoots, that animals were to be seen both morning and evening. Kunwar Singh was of the opinion that some animals might be lurking in the strip of dry grass, and at his suggestion he and Budhoo set fire to it.

When the grass was well alight and the drongos, rollers, and starlings were collecting from the four corners of the heavens to feed on the swarms of grasshoppers that were taking flight to escape from the flames, a movement was observed at the farther edge of the grass, and presently two big boar came out and went streaking across the burnt ground for the shelter of the tree jungle three hundred yards away. Very deliberately Ellis, who weighed fourteen stone, knelt down, raised his rifle and sent a bullet after the hindmost pig, kicking up the dust between its hind legs. Lowering his rifle, Ellis adjusted the back sight to two hundred yards, ejected the spent cartridge, and rammed a fresh one into the breach. His second bullet sent up a cloud of dust immediately in front of the leading pig. This second bullet deflected the pigs to the right, bringing them broadside onto the guns, and making them increase their speed.

It was now Tom's turn to shoot, and to shoot in a hurry, for the pigs were fast approaching the tree jungle, and getting out of range. Standing four-square, Tom raised his rifle and, as the two shots rang out the pigs, both shot through the head, went over like rabbits. Kunwar Singh's recital of this event invariably ended up with: 'And then I turned to Budhoo, that city-bred son of a low-caste man, the smell of whose oiled hair offended me, and said, "Did you see that, you, who boasted that your sahib would teach mine how to shoot? Had my sahib wanted to blacken the face of yours he would not have used two bullets, but would have killed both pigs with one".'

Just how this feat could have been accomplished, Kunwar Singh never told me, and I never asked, for my faith in my hero was so great that I never

for one moment doubted that, if he had wished, he could have killed both pigs with one bullet. Kunwar Singh was the first to visit me that day of days when I was given my first gun. He came early, and as with great pride I put the old double-barrelled muzzle-loader into his hands he never, even by the flicker of an eyelid, showed that he had seen the gaping split in the right barrel, or the lappings of brass wire that held the stock and the barrels together. Only the good qualities of the left barrel were commented on, and extolled; its length, thickness, and the years of service it would give. And then, laying the gun aside, he turned to me and gladdened my eight-year-old heart and made me doubly proud of my possession by saying: 'You are now no longer a boy, but a man; and with this good gun you can go anywhere you like in our jungles and never be afraid, provided you learn how to climb trees.

And I will now tell you a story to show how necessary it is for us men who shoot in the jungles to know how to do so. 'Har Singh and I went out to shoot one day last April, and all would have been well if a fox had not crossed our path as we were leaving the village. Har Singh, as you know, is a poor *shikari* with little knowledge of the jungle folk, and when, after seeing the fox, I suggested we should turn round and go home he laughed at me and said it was child's talk to say that a fox would bring us bad luck. So we continued on our way. We had started when the stars were paling, and near Garuppu I fired at a chital stag and unaccountably missed it. Later Har Singh broke the wing of a pea fowl, but though we chased the wounded bird as hard as we could it got away in the long grass, where we lost it. Thereafter, though we combed the jungles we saw nothing to shoot, and towards the evening we turned our faces towards home.

'Having fired two shots, and being afraid that the forest guards would be looking for us, we avoided the road and took a sandy *nullah* that ran through dense scrub and thorn-bamboo jungle. As we went along talking of our bad luck, suddenly a tiger came out into the *nullah* and stood looking at us. For a long minute the tiger stared and then it turned and went back the way it had come. 'After waiting a suitable time we continued on our way, when the tiger again came out into the nullah; and this time, as it stood and looked at us, it was growling and twitching its tail. We again stood quite

still, and after a time the tiger quietened down and left the nullah. A little later a number of jungle fowl rose cackling out of the dense scrub, evidently disturbed by the tiger, and one of them came and sat on a haldu tree right in front of us. As the bird alighted on a branch in full view of us, Har Singh said he would shoot it and so avoid going home empty handed. He added that the shot would frighten away the tiger, and before I could stop him he fired.

‘Next second there was a terrifying roar as the tiger came crashing through the brushwood towards us. At this spot there were some *runi* trees growing on the edge of the nullah, and I dashed towards one while Har Singh dashed towards another. My tree was the nearer to the tiger, but before it arrived I had climbed out of reach. Har Singh had not learnt to climb trees when a boy, as I had and he was still standing on the ground, reaching up and trying to grasp a branch, when the tiger, after leaving me, sprang at him.

The tiger did not bite or scratch Har Singh, but standing on its hind legs it clasped the tree, pinning Har Singh against it, and then started to claw big bits of bark and wood off the far side of the tree. While it was so engaged, Har Singh was screaming and the tiger was roaring. I had taken my gun up into the tree with me, so now, holding on with my bare feet, I cocked the hammer and fired the gun off into the air. On hearing the shot so close to it the tiger bounded away, and Har Singh collapsed at the foot of the tree.’

When the tiger had been gone some time, I climbed down very silently, and went to Har Singh. I found that one of the tiger’s claws had entered his stomach and torn the lining from near his navel to within a few fingers’ breadth of the backbone, and that all his inside had fallen out. Here was great trouble for me. I could not run away and leave Har Singh, and not having any experience in these matters, I did not know whether it would be best to try and put all that mass of inside back into Har Singh’s stomach, or cut it off. I talked in whispers on this matter with Har Singh, for we were afraid that if the tiger heard us it would return and kill us, and Har Singh was of the opinion that his inside should be put back into his stomach.



So, while he lay on his back on the ground, I stuffed it all back, including the dry leaves and grass and bits of sticks that were sticking to it. I then wound my pugree round him, knotting it tight to keep everything from falling out again, and we set out on the seven-mile walk to our village, myself in front, carrying the two guns, while Har Singh walked behind. 'We had to go slowly, for Har Singh was holding the pugree in position, and on the way night came on and Har Singh said he thought it would be better to go to the hospital at Kaladhungi than to our village; so I hid the guns, and we went the extra three miles to the hospital.

The hospital was closed when we arrived, but the doctor babu who lives near by was awake, and when he heard our story he sent me to call Aladia the tobacco seller, who is also postmaster at Kaladhungi and who receives five rupees pay per month from Government, while he lit a lantern and went to the hospital hut with Har Singh. When I returned with Aladia, the doctor had laid Har Singh on a string bed and, while Aladia held the lantern and I held the two pieces of flesh together, the doctor sewed up the hole in Har Singh's stomach. Thereafter the doctor, who is a very kind man of raw years and who refused to take the two rupees I offered him, gave Har Singh a drink of very good medicine to make him forget the pain in his stomach and we went home and found our women folk crying, for they thought we had been killed in the jungle by dacoits, or by wild animals. So you see, Sahib, how necessary it is for us men who shoot in the jungles to know how to climb trees, for if Har Singh had had someone to advise him when he was a boy, he would not have brought all that trouble on us. (The *runi* tree against which the tigress— who evidently had just given birth to cubs in that area, and who resented the presence of human beings— pinned Har Singh was about eighteen inches thick, and in her rage the tigress tore away a third of it. This tree became a landmark for all who shot or poached in the Garuppu jungles until, some twenty-five years later, it was destroyed by a forest fire. Har Singh, in spite of the rough and ready treatment he received at the hands his three friends, and in spite of the vegetation that went inside him, suffered no ill effects from his wounds, and lived to die of old age.)

I learnt many things from Kunwar Singh during the first few years that I carried the old muzzle-loader, one of them being the making of mental

maps. The jungles we hunted in, sometimes together, but more often alone — for Kunwar Singh had a horror of dacoits and there were times when for weeks on end he would not leave his village— were many hundreds of miles square with only one road running through them. Times without number when returning from a shoot I called in at Kunwar Singh's village, which was three miles nearer the forest than my house was, to tell him I had shot a chital or *sambhar* stag, or maybe a big pig, and to ask him to retrieve the bag.

He never once failed to do so, no matter in how great a wilderness of tree or scrub or grass jungle I had carefully hidden the animal I had shot, to protect it from vultures. We had a name for every outstanding tree, and for every water hole, game track, and nullah. All our distances were measured by imaginary flight of a bullet fired from a muzzle-loader, and all our directions fixed by 'The *runi* tree against which the tigress— who evidently had just given birth to cubs in that area, and who resented the presence of human beings— pinned Har Singh, was about eighteen inches thick, and in her rage the tigress tore away a third of it.

This tree became a landmark for all who shot or poached in the Garuppu jungles until, some twenty-five years later; it was destroyed by a forest fire. Har Singh, in spite of the rough and ready treatment he received at the hands of his three friends, and in spite of the vegetation that went inside him, suffered no ill effects from his wound, and lived to die of old age. The four points of the compass. When I had hidden an animal, or Kunwar Singh had seen vultures collected on a tree and suspected that a leopard or a tiger had made a kill, either he or I would set out with absolute, confidence that we would find the spot indicated, no matter what time of day or night it might be.

After I left school and started work in Bengal I was only able to visit Kaladhungi for about three weeks each year, and I was greatly distressed to find on one of these annual visits that my old friend Kunwar Singh had fallen a victim to the curse of our foothills, opium. With a constitution weakened by malaria the pernicious habit grew on him, and though he made me many promises he had not the moral strength to keep them. I was

therefore not surprised, on my visit to Kaladhungi one February; to be told by the men in our village that Kunwar Singh was very seriously ill. News of my arrival spread through Kaladhungi that night, and next day Kunwar Singh's youngest son, a lad of eighteen, came hot-foot to tell me that his father was at death's door, and that he wished to see me before he died.

As headman of Chandni Chauk, paying Government land revenue of four thousand rupees, Kunwar Singh was an important person, and lived in a big stone-built house with a slate roof in which I had often enjoyed his hospitality. Now as I approached the village in company with his son, I heard the wailing of women coming, not from the house, but from a small one-roomed hut Kunwar Singh had built for one of his servants. As the son led me towards the hut, he said his father had been moved to it because the grandchildren disturbed his sleep. Seeing us coming, Kunwar Singh's eldest son stepped out of the hut and informed me that his father was unconscious, and that he only had a few minutes to live. I stopped at the door of the hut, and when my eyes had got accustomed to the dim light, made dimmer by a thick pall of smoke which filled the room, I saw Kunwar Singh lying on the bare mud floor, naked, and partly covered with a sheet. His nerveless right arm was supported by an old man sitting on the floor near him, and his fingers were being held round the tail of a cow. (This custom of a dying man being made to hold the tail of a cow— preferably that of a black heifer — has its origin in the Hindu belief that when the spirit leaves its earthly body it is confronted with a river of blood, on the far side of which sits the Judge before whom the spirit must appear to answer for its sins. The heifer's tail is the only way by which the departing spirit can cross the river, and if the spirit is not provided with means of transit it is condemned to remain on earth, to be a torment to those who failed to enable it to appear before the judgment seat.)

Near Kunwar Singh's head was a brazier with cow-dung cakes burning on it, and by the brazier a priest was sitting, intoning prayers and ringing a bell. Every available inch of floor space was packed with men, and with women who were wailing and repeating over and over again, 'He has gone! He has gone!' I knew men died like this in India every day, but I was not going to let my friend be one of them. In fact, if I could help it he would not

die at all, and anyway not at present. Striding into the room, I picked up the iron brazier, which was hotter than I expected it to be, and burnt my hands. This I carried to the door and flung outside. Returning, I cut the bark rope by which the cow was tethered to a peg driven into the mud floor, and led it outside.

As these acts, which I had performed in silence, became evident to the people assembled in the room, the hubbub began to die down, and it ceased altogether when I took the priest's arm and conducted him from the room. Then, standing at the door, I ordered everyone to go outside; the order was obeyed without a murmur or a single protest. The number of people, both old and young, who emerged from the hut, was incredible. When the last of them had crossed the doorstep, I told Kunwar Singh's eldest son to warm two seers of fresh milk and to bring it to me with as little delay as possible. The man looked at me in blank surprise, but when I repeated the order he hurried off to execute it. I now re-entered the hut, pulled forward a string bed which had been pushed against the wall, picked Kunwar Singh up and laid him on it.

Fresh air, and plenty of it, was urgently needed, and as I looked round I saw a small window which had been boarded up. It did not take long to tear down the boards and let a stream of clean sweet air blow directly from the jungles into the overheated room which reeked with the smell of human beings, cow dung, burnt ghee, and acrid smoke. When I picked up Kunwar Singh's wasted frame, I knew there was a little life in it, but only a very little. His eyes, which were sunk deep into his head, were closed, his lips were blue, and his breath was coming in short gasps.

Soon, however, the fresh, clean air began to revive him and his breathing became less laboured and more regular, and presently, as I sat on his bed and watched through the door the commotion that was taking place among the mourners whom I had ejected from the death-chamber, I became aware that he had opened his eyes and was looking at me; and without turning my head, I began to speak. 'Times have changed, uncle, and you with them. There was a day when no man would have dared to remove you from your own house, and lay you on the ground in a servant's hut to die like an

outcaste and a beggar. You would not listen to my words of warning and now the accursed drug has brought you to this. Had I delayed but a few minutes in answering your summons this day, you know you would by now have been on your way to the burning-ghat. As headman of Chandni Chauk and the best *shikari* in Kaladhungi, all men respected you. But now you have lost that respect, and you who were strong, and who ate of the best, are weak and empty of stomach, for as we came your son told me nothing has passed your lips for sixteen days. But you are not going to die, old friend, as they told you were. You will live for many more years, and though we may never shoot together again in the Garuppu jungles, you will not want for game, for I will share all I shoot with you, as I have always done. 'And now, here in this hut, with the sacred thread round your fingers and a pipal leaf in your hands, you must swear an oath on your eldest son's head that never again will you touch the foul drug. And this time you will and you shall keep your oath. And now, while we wait for the milk your son is bringing, we will smoke.'

Kunwar Singh had not taken his eyes off me while I was speaking and now for the first time he opened his lips and said, 'How can a man who is dying smoke?' 'On the subject of dying', I said, 'we will say no more, for as I have just told you, you are not going to die. And as to how we will smoke, I will show you.' Then, taking two cigarettes from my case, I lit one and placed it between his lips. Slowly he took a pull at it, coughed, and with a very feeble hand removed the cigarette. But when the fit of coughing was over, he replaced it between his lips and continued to draw on it. Before we had finished our smoke, Kunwar Singh's son returned carrying a big brass vessel, which he would have dropped at the door if I had not hurriedly relieved him of it. His surprise was understandable, for the father whom he had last seen lying on the ground dying, was now lying on the bed, his head resting on my hat, smoking. There was nothing in the hut to drink from, so I sent the son back to the house for a cup; and when he had brought it I gave Kunwar Singh a drink of warm milk.

I stayed in the hut till late into the night, and when I left Kunwar Singh had drunk a seer of milk and was sleeping peacefully on a warm and comfortable bed. Before I left I warned the son that he was on no account to

allow anyone to come near the hut; that he was to sit by his father and give him a drink of milk every time he awoke; and that if on my return in the morning I found Kunwar Singh dead, I would burn down the village. The sun was just rising next morning when I returned to Chandni Chauk to find both Kunwar Singh and his son fast asleep and the brass vessel empty. Kunwar Singh kept his oath, and though he never regained sufficient strength to accompany me on my *shikar* expeditions, he visited me often and died peacefully four years later in his own house and on his own bed.



## *Mothi*

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**M**OTHI had the delicate, finely chiselled features that are the heritage of all high-caste people in India, but he was only a young stripling, all arms and legs, when his father and mother died and left him with the responsibilities of the family. Fortunately it was a small one, consisting only of his younger brother and sister. Mothi was at that time fourteen years of age, and had been married for six years. One of his first acts on finding himself unexpectedly the head of the family was to fetch his twelve-year-old wife—whom he had not seen since the day of their wedding—from her father's house in the Kota Dun, some dozen miles from Kaladhungi. As the cultivation of the six acres of land Mothi inherited entailed more work than the four young people could tackle, Mothi took on a partner, locally known as Agee, who in return for his day-and-night services received free board and lodging and half of the crops produced. The building of the communal hut with bamboos and grass procured from the jungles, under permit, and carried long distances on shoulder and on head, and the constant repairs to the hut necessitated by the violent storms that sweep the foothills, threw a heavy burden on Mothi and his helpers, and to relieve them of this burden I built them a masonry house, with three rooms and a wide veranda, on a four-foot plinth. For, with the exception of Mothi's wife who had come from a higher altitude, all of them were steeped in malaria.

To protect their crops the tenants used to erect a thorn fence round the entire village, but though it entailed weeks of hard labour, this flimsy fence afforded little protection against stray cattle and wild animals, and when the crops were on the ground the tenants, or members of their families, had to keep watch in the fields all night. Firearms were strictly rationed, and for our forty tenants the Government allowed us one single-barrelled muzzle-loading gun. This gun enables one tenant in turn to protect his crops with a lethal weapon, while the others had to rely on tin cans which they beat throughout the night. Though the gun accounted for a certain number of pigs and porcupines, which were the worst offenders, the nightly damage was considerable, for the village was isolated and surrounded by forests.

So, when my handling contract at Mokameh Ghat began paying a dividend, I started building a masonry wall round the village. When completed the wall was six feet high and three miles long. It took ten years to build, for my share of the dividends was small. If today you motor from Haldwani to Ramnagar, through Kaladhungi, you will skirt the upper end of the wall before you cross the Boar Bridge and enter the forest.

I was walking through the village one cold December morning, with Robin, my dog, running ahead and putting up covey after covey of grey partridge which no one but Robin ever disturbed—for all who lived in the village loved to hear them calling at sunrise and at sunset—when in the soft ground at the edge of one of the irrigation channels I saw the tracks of a pig. This pig, with great, curved, wicked-looking tusks, was as big as a buffalo calf and was known to everyone in the village. As a squeaker he had wormed his way through the thorn fence and fattened on the crops the wall had worried him at first, but it had a rough face and, being a determined pig, he had in time learnt to climb it. Time and time again the watchers in the fields had fired at him and on several occasions he had left a blood trail, but none of his wounds had proved fatal and the only effect they had had on him was to make him more wary.

On this December morning the pig's tracks led me towards Mothi's holding, and as I approached the house I saw Mothi's wife standing in front of it, her hands on her hips, surveying the ruin of their potato patch. The pig had done a very thorough job, for the tubers were not mature and he had been hungry, and while Robin cast round to see in which direction the marauder had gone the woman gave vent to her feelings. 'It is all Punwa's father's fault', she said. 'It was his turn for the gun last night, and instead of staying at home and looking after his own property he must need go and sit up in Kalu's wheat field because he thought there was a chance of shooting a *sambhar* there. And while he was away, this is what the *shaitan* has done.' No woman in our part of India ever refers to her husband, or addresses him, by name. Before children are born he is referred to as the man of the house, and after children come is spoken of and addressed as the father of the firstborn. Mothi now had three children, of whom the eldest was Punwa, so



to his wife he was 'Punwa's father', and his wife to everyone in the village was 'Punwa's mother'.

Punwa's mother was not only the hardest-working woman in our village but she also had the sharpest tongue, and after telling me in no uncertain terms what she thought of Punwa's father for having absented himself the previous night, she turned on me and said I had wasted my money in building a wall over which a pig could climb to eat her potatoes, and that if I could not shoot the pig myself it was my duty to raise the wall a few feet so that no pig could climb over it. Mothi fortunately arrived while the storm was still breaking over my head, so whistling to Robin I beat a hasty retreat and left him to weather it.

That evening I picked up the tracks of the pig on the far side of the wall and followed them for two miles, at times along game paths and at times along the bank of the Boar River, until they led me to a dense patch of thorn bushes interlaced with lantana. At the edge of this cover I took up position, as there was a fifty- fifty chance of the pig leaving the cover while there was still sufficient light for me to shoot by. Shortly after I had taken up position behind a rock on the bank of the river, a *sambhar* hind started belling at the upper end of the jungle in which a few years later I was to shoot the Bachelor of Powalgarh. The hind was warning the jungle folk of the presence of a tiger. A fortnight previously a party of three guns, with eight elephants, had arrived in Kaladhungi with the express purpose of shooting a tiger which, at that time, had his headquarters in the forest block for which I had a shooting pass.

The Boar River formed the boundary between my block and the block taken by the party of three guns, and they had enticed the tiger to kill in their block by tying up fourteen young buffaloes on their side of the river. Two of these buffaloes had been killed by the tiger, the other twelve had died of neglect, and at about nine o'clock the previous night I had heard the report of a heavy rifle. I sat behind the rock for two hours, listening to the belling *sambhar* but without seeing anything of the pig, and when there was no longer any light to shoot by I crossed the river and, gaining the Kota road, loped down it, easing up and moving cautiously when passing the

caves in which a big python lived, and where Bill Bailey of the Forest Department a month previously had shot a twelve-foot hamadryad. At the village gate I stopped and shouted to Mothi to be ready to accompany me at crack of dawn next morning.

Mothi had been my constant companion in the Kaladhungi jungles for many years. He was keen and intelligent, gifted with good eyesight and hearing, could move through the jungles silently, and was as brave as man could be. He was never late for an appointment, and as we walked through the dew-drenched jungle that morning, listening to the multitude of sounds of the awakening jungle folk, I told him of the belling of the *sambhar* hind and of my suspicion that she had witnessed the killing of her young one by the tiger, and that she had stayed to watch the tiger on his kill—a not uncommon occurrence—for in no other way could I account for her sustained belling.

Mothi was delighted at the prospect of our finding a fresh kill, for his means only permitted of his buying meat for his family once a month, and a *sambhar*, chital, or pig, freshly killed by a tiger or by a leopard, was a godsend to him. I had located the belling *sambhar* as being due north and some fifteen hundred yards from me the previous evening, and when we arrived at this spot and found no kill we started looking on the ground for blood, hair, or a drag mark that would lead us to the kill; for I was still convinced that there was a kill to be found and that the killer was a tiger.

At this spot two shallow depressions, coming down from the foot of the hill a few hundred yards away, met. The depressions ran more or less parallel to each other at a distance of about thirty yards and Mothi suggested that he should go up the right-hand depression while I went up the other. As there were only low bushes between, and we should be close to, and within sight of, each other, I agreed to the suggestion.

We had proceeded a hundred yards examining every foot of the ground, and going dead slow, when Mothi, just as I turned my head to look at him started backwards, screaming as he did so. Then he whipped round and ran for dear life, beating the air with his hands as if warding off a swarm of

bees and continuing to scream as he ran. The sudden and piercing scream of a human being in a jungle where a moment before all has been silent is terrifying to hear, and quite impossible to describe. Instinctively I knew what had happened. With his eyes fixed on the ground, looking for blood or hair, Mothi had failed to see where he was going, and had walked on to the tiger. Whether he had been badly mauled or not I could not see, for only his head and shoulders were visible above the bushes. I kept the sights of my rifle a foot behind him as he ran, intending to press the trigger if I saw any movement, but to my intense relief there was no movement as I swung round, and after he had covered a hundred yards I considered he was safe. I yelled to him to stop, adding that I was coming to him, then, backing away for a few yards, for I did not know whether the tiger had changed his position I hurried down the depression towards Mothi. He was standing with his back against a tree and I was greatly relieved to see that there was no blood on him or on the ground on which he was standing. As I reached him he asked what had happened, and when I told him that nothing had happened he expressed great surprise. He asked if the tiger had not sprung at him, or followed him; and when I replied that he had done everything possible to make the tiger do so, he said, 'I know, Sahib. I know I should not have screamed and run, but I— could— not— help— ' as his voice tailed away and his head came forward I caught him by the throat, but he slipped through my hands and slumped to the ground. Every drop of blood had drained from his face, and as he lay minute after long minute without any movement, I feared the shock had killed him.

There is little one can do in the jungles in an emergency of this kind, and that little I did. I stretched Mothi on his back, loosened his clothes, and massaged the region of his heart. Just as I was giving up hope and preparing to carry him home, he opened his eyes.

When Mothi was comfortably seated on the ground with his back to the tree and a half-smoked cigarette between his lips I asked him to tell me exactly what had happened.

'I had gone a short distance up the depression after I left you', he said, 'closely examining the ground for traces of blood or hair, when I saw what

looked like a spot of dry blood on a leaf. So I stooped down to have a closer look and, as I raised my head, I looked straight into the face of the tiger. The tiger was lying crouched down facing me at a distance of three or four paces. His head was a little raised off the ground; his mouth was wide open, and there was blood on his chin and on his chest. He looked as though he was on the point of springing at me, so I lost my head and screamed and ran away.

He had seen nothing of the *sambhar* kill. He said the ground was open and free of bushes and there was no kill where the tiger was lying.

Telling Mothi to stay where he was I stubbed out my cigarette and set off to investigate, for I could think of no reason why a tiger with its mouth open, and blood on its chin and on its chest, should allow Mothi to approach within a few feet, over open ground, and not kill him when he screamed in its face. Going with the utmost caution to the spot where Mothi was standing when he screamed, I saw in front of me a bare patch of ground from which the tiger had swept the carpet of dead leaves as he had rolled from side to side; at the nearer edge of this bare patch of ground there was a semicircle of clotted blood. Skirting round where the tiger had been lying, to avoid disturbing the ground, I picked up on the far side of it a light and fresh blood trail, which for no apparent reason zigzagged towards the hill, and then continued along the foot of the hill for a few hundred yards and entered a deep and narrow ravine in which there was a little stream. Up this ravine, which ran deep into the foothills, the tiger had gone. I made my way back to the bare patch of ground and examined the clotted blood. There were splinters of bone and teeth in it, and these splinters provided me with the explanation I was looking for. The rifle-shot I had heard two nights previously had shattered the tiger's lower jaw, and he had made for the jungle in which he had his home. He had gone as far as his sufferings and loss of blood permitted and had then lain down on the spot where first the *sambhar* had seen him tossing about, and where thirty hours later Mothi walked on to him.

The most painful wound that can be inflicted on an animal, the shattering of the lower jaw, had quite evidently induced high fever and the poor beast

had perhaps only been semiconscious when he heard Mothi screaming in his face. He had got up quietly and staggered away, in a last effort to reach the ravine in which he knew there was water.

To make quite sure that my deductions were correct Mothi and I crossed the river into the adjoining shooting block to have a look at the ground where the fourteen buffaloes had been tied up. Here, high up in a tree, we found the *machan* the three guns had sat on, and the kill the tiger had been eating when fired at. From the kill a heavy blood trail led down to the river, with elephant tracks on each side of it. Leaving Mothi on the right bank I recrossed the river into my block, picked up the blood trail and the elephant tracks, and followed them for five or six hundred yards to where the blood trail led into heavy cover. At the edge of the cover the elephants had halted and, after standing about for some time, had turned to the right and gone away in the direction of Kaladhungi. I had met the returning elephants as I was starting out the previous evening to try and get a shot at the old pig, and one of the guns had asked me where I was going, and when I told him, had appeared to want to tell me something but was restrained from doing so by his companions. So, while the party of three guns went off on their elephants to the Forest Bungalow where they were staying, I had gone off on foot, without any warning, into the jungle in which they had left a wounded tiger.

The walk back to the village from where I had left Mothi was only about three miles, but it took us about as many hours to cover the distance, for Mothi was unaccountably weak and had to rest frequently. After leaving him at his house I went straight to the Forest Bungalow, where I found the party of three packed up and on the point of leaving to catch the evening train at Haldwani. We talked on the steps of the veranda for some little time, I doing most of the talking, and when I learnt that the only reason they could not spare the time to recover the tiger they had wounded was the keeping of a social engagement, I told them that if Mothi died as a result of shock or if the tiger killed any of my tenants, they would have to face a charge of manslaughter. The party left after my talk with them, and next morning, armed with a heavy rifle, I entered the ravine up which the tiger had gone, not with the object of recovering a trophy for others, but with the

object of putting the tiger out of his misery and burning his skin. The ravine, every foot of which I knew, was the last place I would have selected in which to look for a wounded tiger. However, I searched it from top to bottom, and also the hills on either side, for the whole of that day without finding any trace of the tiger, for the blood trail had stopped shortly after he entered the ravine.

Ten days later a forest guard on his rounds came on the remains of a tiger that had been eaten by vultures. In the summer of that year Government made a rule prohibiting sitting up for tigers between the hours of sunset and sunrise, and making it incumbent on sportsmen wounding tigers to make every effort to bring the wounded animal to bag, and to make an immediate report of the occurrence to the nearest Forest Officer and police outpost. Mothi met with his experience in December, and when we left Kaladhungi in April he appeared to be little the worse for the shock. But his luck was out, for a month later he was badly mauled by a leopard he wounded one night in his field and followed next morning into heavy covers and he had hardly recovered from his wounds when he had the misfortune of being responsible for the death of a cow—the greatest crime a Hindu can commit. The cow, an old and decrepit animal that had strayed in from an adjoining village, was grazing in Mothi's field, and as he attempted to drive it out it put its hoof in a deep rat-hole and broke its leg. For weeks Mothi attended assiduously to the cow as it lay in his field, but it died eventually, and the matter being too serious for the village priest to deal with, he ordered Mothi to make a pilgrimage to Hardwar. So, having borrowed money for the journey, to Hardwar Mothi went. Here to the head priest at the main temple Mothi confessed his crime, and after that dignitary had given the offence due consideration he ordered Mothi to make a donation to the temple: this would absolve him of his crime, but in order to show repentance he would have also to do penance. The priest then asked him from what acts he derived most pleasure and Mothi, being without guile, made answer that he derived most pleasure from shooting, and from eating meat. Mothi was then told by the priest that in future he must refrain from these two pleasures.

Mothi returned from his pilgrimage cleared of his crime, but burdened with a lifelong penance. His opportunities-for shooting had been few, for besides having to share the muzzle-loading gun with others he had had to confine his shooting to the village boundaries, as no man in his position was permitted to shoot in Government forests; even so, Mothi had derived great pleasure from the old gun, and from the occasional shots I had permitted him— against all rules— to fire from my rifle. Hard as this half of his penance was the second half was even harder, and, moreover, it adversely affected his health. Though his means had only allowed him to buy a small meat ration once a month, pigs and porcupines were plentiful, and deer occasionally strayed into the fields at night. It was the custom in our village, a custom to which I also adhered, for an animal shot by one to be shared by all, so Mothi had not had to depend entirely on the meat he could buy.

It was during the winter following his pilgrimage to Hardwar that Mothi developed a hacking cough. As the remedies we tried failed to give relief, I got a doctor friend who was passing through Kaladhungi to examine him, and was horrified to learn that he was suffering from tuberculosis. On the doctor's recommendation I sent Mothi to the Bhowali Sanatorium, thirty miles away. Five days later he returned with a letter from the Superintendent of the Sanatorium saying that the case was hopeless, and that for this reason the Superintendent regretted he could not admit Mothi. A medical missionary who was staying with us at the time, and who had worked for years in a sanatorium, advised us to make Mothi sleep in the open and drink a quart of milk with a few drops of paraffin in it each morning. So for the rest of that winter Mothi slept in the open, and while sitting on our veranda, smoking a cigarette and talking to me, each morning drank a quart of milk fresh from our cows.

The poor of India are fatalists, and in addition have little stamina to fight disease. Deprived of our company, though not of our help, Mothi lost hope when we left for our summer home, and died a month later. The women of our foothills are the hardest workers in India, and the hardest working of them all was Mothi's widow, Punwa's mother. A small compact woman, as hard as flint and a beaver for work— young enough to remarry but precluded from doing so by reasons of her caste— she-bravely and

resolutely faced the future, and right gallantly she fulfilled her task, ably assisted by her young children, Of her three children, Punwa, the eldest, was now twelve, and with the assistance of neighbors was able to do the ploughing and other field jobs.

Kunthi, a girl, was ten and married, and until she left the village five years later to join her husband she assisted her mother in all her thousand and one tasks, which included cooking the food and washing up the dishes; washing and mending the clothes— for Punwa's mother was very particular about her own and her children's dress, and no matter how old and patched the garments were, they always had to be clean; fetching water from the irrigation furrow or from the Boar river for domestic purposes; bringing firewood from the jungles, and grass and tender young leaves for the milch, cows and their calves; weeding and cutting the crops; husking the paddy, in a hole cut in a slab of rock, with an iron shod staff that was heavy enough to tire the muscles of any man; winnowing the wheat for Punwa to take to the watermill to be ground into atta; and making frequent visits to the bazaar two miles away to drive hard bargains for the few articles of food and clothing the family could afford to buy. Sher Singh, the youngest child, was eight, and from the moment he opened his eyes at crack of dawn each morning until he closed them when the evening meal had been eaten he did everything that a boy could do. He even gave Punwa a hand with the ploughing, though he had to be helped at the end of each furrow as he was not strong enough to turn the plough.

Sher Singh, without a care in the world, was the happiest child in the village. When he could not be seen he could always be heard, for he loved to sing. The cattle four bullocks, twelve cows, eight calves, and Lalu the bull — were his special charge, and each morning after milking the cows he released the herd from the stakes to which he had tethered them the evening before, drove them out of the shed and through a wicket in the boundary wall, and then set to clean up the shed. It would now be time for the morning meal, and when he heard the call from his brother, or Kunthi, he would hurry home across the fields taking the milk can with him. The frugal morning meal consisted of fresh hot *chapatis* and dal, liberally seasoned with green chillies and salt and cooked in mustard oil. Having



breakfasted, and finished any chores about the house that he was called upon to do, Sher Singh would begin his day's real work. This was to graze the cattle in the jungle, prevent them from straying, and guard them against leopards and tigers. Having collected the four bullocks and twelve cows from the open ground beyond the boundary wall, where they would be lying basking in the sun, and left Kunthi to keep an eye on the calves, this small tousle-headed boy, his axe over his shoulder and Lalu the bull following him, would drive his charges over the Boar Bridge and into the dense jungle beyond, calling to each by name.

Lalu was a young scrub bull destined to be a plough-bullock when he had run his course but who, at the time I am writing about, was free of foot and the pride of Sher Singh his foster-brother, for Lalu had shared his mother's milk with Sher Singh. Sher Singh had christened his foster-brother Lalu, which means red. But Lalu was not red. He was of a light dun colour, with stronger markings on the shoulders and a dark, almost black line running down the length of his back. His horns were short, sharp, and strong, with the light and dark colourings associated with the shuehorns that adorned dressing tables of that period.

When human beings and animals live in close association with each other under conditions in which they are daily subjected to common dangers, each infuses the other with a measure of courage and confidence which the one possesses and the other lacks. Sher Singh, whose father and grandfather had been more at home in the jungles than in the walks of men, had no fear of anything that walked, and Lalu, young and vigorous, had unbounded confidence in himself. So while Sher Singh infused Lalu with courage, Lalu in turn infused Sher Singh with confidence. In consequence Sher Singh's cattle grazed where others feared to go, and he was justly proud of the fact that they were in better condition than any others in the village, and that no-leopard or tiger had ever taken toll of them.

Four miles from our village there is a valley about five miles in length, running north and south, which has no equal in beauty or richness of wild life in the five thousand square miles of forest land in the United Provinces. At the upper end of the valley a clear stream, which grows in volume as it

progresses, gushes from a cave in which a python lives, from under the roots of an old *jamun* tree. This crystal-clear stream with its pools and runs is alive with many kinds of small fish on which live no fewer than five varieties of kingfishers.

In the valley grow flowering and fruit-bearing trees and bushes that attract a multitude of nectar-drinking and fruit-eating birds and animals, which in turn attract predatory birds and carnivorous animals which find ample cover in the dense undergrowth and matted cane-brakes. In places the set of the stream has caused miniature landslides, and on these grows a reedy kind of grass, with broad lush leaves, much fancied by *sambhar* and kakar.

The valley was a favourite haunt of mine. One winter -evening, shortly after our descent to Kaladhungi from our summer home, I was standing at a point where there is a clear view into the valley when, in a clump of grass to the left, I saw a movement. After a long scrutiny the movement revealed itself as an animal feeding on the lush grass on a steep slope. The animal was too light for a *sambhar* and too big for a kakar, so I set out to stalk it, and as I did so a tiger started calling in the valley a few hundred yards lower down. My quarry also heard the tiger, and as it raised its head I saw to my surprise that it was Lalu. With head poised he stood perfectly still listening to the tiger, and when it stopped calling, he unconcernedly resumed cropping the grass. This was forbidden ground for Lalu, for cattle are not permitted to graze in Government Reserved Forests, and moreover Lalu was in danger from the tiger; so I called to him by name and, after a little hesitation, he came up the steep bank and we returned to the village together. Sher Singh was tying up his cattle in the shed when we arrived, and when I told him where I had found Lalu he laughed and said, 'Don't fear for this one, Sahib. The forest guard is a friend of mine and would not impound my Lalu, and as for the tiger, Lalu is well able to take care of himself.'

Not long after this incident, the Chief Conservator of Forests, Smythies, and his wife arrived on tour in Kaladhungi, and as the camels carrying their camp equipment were coming down the forest road towards the Boar

Bridge, a tiger killed a cow on the road in front of them. On the approach of the camels, and the shouting of the men with them, the tiger left the cow on the road and bounded into the jungle. The Smythies were sitting on our veranda having morning coffee when the camel men brought word of the killing of the cow. Mrs. Smythies was keen to shoot the tiger, so I went off with two of her men to put up a *machan* for her, and found that in the meantime the tiger had returned and dragged the cow twenty yards into the jungle. When the *machan* was ready I sent back for Mrs. Smythies and, after putting her into the *machan* with a forest guard to keep her company, I climbed a tree on the edge of the road hoping to get a photograph of the tiger.

It was 4 p.m. We had been in position half an hour and a *kakar* had just started barking in the direction in which we knew the tiger was lying up, when down the road came Lalu. On reaching the spot where the cow had been killed he very carefully smelt the ground and a big pool of blood, then turned to the edge of the road and with head held high and nose stretched out started to follow the drag. When he saw the cow he circled round her, tearing up the ground with his hoofs and snorting with rage. After tying my camera to a branch I slipped off the tree and conducted a very angry and protesting Lalu to the edge of the village. Hardly had I returned to my perch on the tree, however, when up the road came Lalu to make a second demonstration round the dead cow. Mrs. Smythies now sent the forest guard to drive Lalu away, and as the man passed me I told him to take the bull across the Boar Bridge and to remain there with the elephant that was coming later for Mrs. Smythies. The *kakar* had stopped barking some time previously and a covey of jungle fowl now started cackling a few yards behind the machan. Getting my camera ready I looked towards Mrs. Smythies, and saw she had her rifle poised, and at that moment Lalu appeared for the third time. (We learnt later that, after being taken across the bridge, he had circled round, crossed the river bed lower down and disappeared into the jungle.) This time Lalu trotted up to the cow and, either seeing or smelling the tiger, lowered his head and charged into the bushes, bellowing loudly. Three times he did this, and after each charge he retreated backwards to his starting-point, slashing upwards with his horns as he did so. I have seen buffaloes driving tigers away from their kills, and I have

seen cattle doing the same with leopards but, with the exception of a Himalayan bear, I had never before seen a solitary animal— and a scrub bull at that— drive a tiger away from his kill.

Courageous as Lalu was he was no match for the tiger, who was now losing his temper and answering Lalu's bellows with angry growls. Remembering a small boy back in the village whose heart would break if anything happened to his beloved companion, I was on the point of going to Lalu's help when Mrs. Smythies very sportingly gave up her chance of shooting the tiger, so I shouted to the *mahout* to bring up the elephant. Lalu was very subdued as he followed me to the shed where Sher Singh was waiting to tie him up, and I think he was as relieved as I was that the tiger had not accepted his challenge while he was defending the dead cow. The tiger fed on the cow that night and next evening, and while Mrs. Smythies was having another Unsuccessful try to get a shot at him, I took a ciné picture which some who read this story may remember having seen. In the picture the tiger is seen coming down a steep bank, and drinking at a little pool.

The jungle was Sher Singh's playground, the only playground he ever knew, just as it had been my playground as a boy, and of all whom I have known he alone enjoyed the jungles as much as I have done. Intelligent and observant, his knowledge of jungle lore was incredible. Nothing escaped his attention, and he was as fearless as the animal whose name he bore.

Our favourite evening walk was along one of the three roads which met on the far side of the Boar Bridge— the abandoned trunk road to Moradabad, the road to Kota, and the forest road to Ramnagar. Most evenings at sundown we would hear Sher Singh before we saw him, for he sang with abandon in a clear treble voice that carried far as he drove his cattle home. Always he would greet us with a smile and a salaam, and always he would have something interesting to tell us.

'The big tiger's tracks were on the road this morning coming from the direction of Kota and going towards Naya Gaon, and at midday I heard him calling at the lower end of the Dhunigad cane-brake.' 'Near Saryapani I

heard the clattering of horns, so I climbed a tree and saw two chital stags righting. One of them has very big horns, Sahib, and is very fat, and I have eaten no meat for many days.'

'What am I carrying?'— He had something wrapped in big green leaves and tied round with bark balanced on his tousled head. 'I am carrying a pig's leg. I saw some vultures on a tree, so I went to have a look and under a bush I found a pig killed by a leopard last night and partly eaten. If you want to shoot the leopard, Sahib, I will take you to the kill.' 'Today I found a beehive in a hollow haldu tree', he said one day, proudly exhibiting a large platter of leaves held together with long thorns on which the snow-white comb was resting. 'I have brought the honey for you.' Then, glancing at the rifle in my hands, he added, 'I will bring the honey to the house when I have finished my work for perchance you may meet a pig or a *kakar* and with the honey in your hands you would not be able to shoot.' The cutting of the hive out of the haldu tree with his small axe had probably taken him two hours or more, and he had got badly stung in the process, for his hands were swollen and one eye was nearly closed, but he said nothing about this and to have commented on it would have embarrassed him.

Later that night, while we were having dinner, he slipped silently into the room and as he laid the brass tray, polished till it looked like gold, on our table, he touched the elbow of his right arm with the fingers of his left hand, an old hill custom denoting respect, which is fast dying out. After depositing such a gift on the table, leaving the tray for Kunthi to call for in the morning, Sher Singh would pause at the door and, looking down and scratching the carpet with his toes, would say, 'If you are going bird shooting tomorrow I will send Kunthi out with the cattle and come with you, for I know where there are a lot of birds'. He was always shy in a house, and on these occasions spoke with a catch in his voice as though he had too many words in his mouth and was trying, with difficulty, to swallow the ones that were getting in his way.

Sher Singh was in his element on these bird shoots, which the boys of the village enjoyed as much as he and I did, for in addition to the excitement and the prospect of having a bird to take home at the end of the day, there

was always a halt at midday at a prearranged spot to which the man sent out earlier would bring the fresh sweets and parched gram that would provide a meal for all.

When I had taken my position, Sher Singh would line up his companions and beat the selected cover towards me, shouting the loudest of them all and worming his way through the thickest cover. When a bird was put up he would yell, ' it's coming, Sahib! It's coming!' Or when a heavy animal went crashing through the undergrowth, as very frequently happened, he would call to his companions not to run away, assuring them that it was only a sambhar, or a chital, or maybe a sounder of pig. Ten to twelve patches of cover would be beaten in the course of the day, yielding as many pea fowl and jungle fowl, and two or three hares, and possibly a small pig or a porcupine. At the end of the last beat the bag would be shared out among the beaters and the gun, or if the bag was small only among the beaters and Sher Singh was never more happy than when, at the end of the day, he made for home with a peacock in full plumage proudly draped over his shoulders.

Punwa was now married, and the day was fast approaching when Sher Singh would have to leave the home, for there was not sufficient room on the small holding of six acres for the two brothers. Knowing that it would break Sher Singh's heart to leave the village and his beloved jungles, I decided to apprentice him to a friend who had a garage at Kathgodam, and who ran a fleet of cars on the Naini Tal motor road. After his training it was my intention to employ Sher Singh to drive our car and accompany me on my shooting trips during the winter, and to look after our cottage and garden at Kaladhungi while we were in Naini Tal during the summer. Sher Singh was speechless with delight when I told him of the plans I had made for him, plans which ensured his continued residence in the village, and within sight and calling distance of the home he had never left from the day of his birth. Plans a-many we make in life, and I am not sure there is cause for regret when some go wrong. Sher Singh was to have started his apprenticeship when we returned to Kaladhungi in November. In October he contracted malignant malaria which led to pneumonia, and a few days before we arrived he died. During his boyhood's years he had sung through

life happy as the day was long and, had he lived, who can say that his life in a changing world would have been as happy, and as carefree, as those first few years? Before leaving our home for a spell, to regain in new climes the health we lost in Hitler's war, I called together our tenants and their families as I had done on two previous occasions, to tell them the time had come for them to take over their holdings and run the village for themselves. Punwa's mother was the spokesman for the tenants on this occasion, and after I had had my say she got to her feet and, in her practical way, spoke as follows: 'You have called us away from our work to no purpose. We have told you before and we tell you again that we will not take your land from you, for to do so would imply that we were no longer your people. And now, Sahib, what about the pig, the son of the *shaitan* who climbed your wall and ate my potatoes? Punwa and these others cannot shoot it and I am tired of sitting up all night and beating a tin can.'

Maggie and I were walking along the fire-track that skirts the foothills with David at our heels when the pig—worthy son of the old *shaitan* who, full of years and pellets of buckshot, had been killed in an all-night fight with a tiger—trotted across the track.

The sun had set and the range was long— all of three hundred yards— but a shot was justifiable for the pig was quite evidently on his way to the village. I adjusted the sights and, resting the rifle against a tree, waited until the pig paused at the edge of a deep depression. When I pressed the trigger, the pig jumped into the depression, scrambled out on the far side, and made off at top speed. 'Have you missed him?' asked Maggie, and with his eyes David put the same question. There was no reason, except miscalculation of the range, why I should not have hit the pig, for my silver foresight had shown up clearly on his black skin, and the tree had assisted me to take steady aim. Anyway, it was time to make for home, and as the cattle track down which the pig had been going would lead us to the Boar Bridge we set off to see the result of my shot. The pig's feet had bitten deeply into the ground where he had taken off, and on the far side of the depression, where he had scrambled out, there was blood. Two hundred yards in the direction in which the pig had gone there was a narrow strip of dense cover. I should probably find him dead in the morning in this cover, for the blood trail was

heavy; but if he was not dead and there was trouble, Maggie would not be with me, and there would be more light to shoot by in the morning than there was now.

Punwa had heard my shot and was waiting on the bridge for us. 'Yes', I said, in reply to his eager inquiry, 'it was the old pig I fired at, and judging by the blood trail, he is hit hard.' I added that if he met me on the bridge next morning I would show him where the pig was, so that later he could take out a party of men to bring it in. 'May I bring the old havildar too?' said Punwa, and I agreed.

The havildar, a kindly old man who had won the respect and affection of all, was a Gurkha who on leaving the army had joined the police, and having retired a year previously had settled down with his wife and two sons on a plot of land we had given him in our village. Like all Gurkhas the havildar had an insatiable appetite for pig's flesh, and when a pig was shot by any of us it was an understood thing that, no matter who went short, the ex-soldier-policeman must have his share. Punwa and the havildar were waiting for me at the bridge next morning. Following the cattle track, we soon reached the spot where, the previous evening, I had seen the blood. From here we followed the well-defined blood trail which led us, as I had expected, to the dense cover. I left my companions at the edge of the cover, for a wounded pig is a dangerous animal, and with one exception—a bear—is the only animal in our jungles that has the unpleasant habit of savaging any human being who has the misfortune to be attacked and knocked down by him. For this reason wounded pigs, especially if they have big tusks, have to be treated with great respect. The pig had stopped where I had expected him to, but he had not died, and at daybreak he had got up from where he had been lying all night and left the cover. I whistled to Punwa and the havildar and when they rejoined me we set off to trail the animal.

The trail led us across the fire-track, and from the direction in which the wounded animal was going it was evident he was making for the heavy jungle on the far side of the hill, from which I suspected he had come the previous evening. The morning blood trail was light and continued to get



lighter the farther we went, until we lost it altogether in a belt of trees, the fallen leaves of which a gust of wind had disturbed. In front of us at this spot was a tinder-dry stretch of waist-high grass. Still under the conviction that the pig was heading for the heavy jungle on the far side of the hill, I entered the grass, hoping to pick up the tracks again on the far side.

The havildar had lagged some distance behind, but Punwa was immediately behind me when, after we had gone a few yards into the grass, my woollen stockings caught on the thorns of a low bush. While I was stooping to free myself, Punwa, to avoid the thorns, moved a few paces to the right and I just got free and was straightening up when out of the grass shot the pig and with an angry grunt went straight for Punwa, who was wearing a white shirt. I then did what I have always asked companions who have accompanied me into the jungles after dangerous game to do if they saw me attacked by a wounded animal. I threw the muzzle of my rifle into the air, and shouted at the top of my voice as I pressed the trigger.

If the thorns had not caught in my stockings and lost me a fraction of a second, all would have been well, for I should have killed the pig before it got to Punwa; but once the pig had reached him the only thing I could do to help him was to try to cause a diversion, for to have fired in his direction would further have endangered his life. As the bullet was leaving my rifle to land in the jungle a mile away, Punwa, with a despairing scream of 'Sahib', was falling backwards into the grass with the pig right on top of him, but at my shout and the crack of the rifle the pig turned like a whiplash straight for me, and before I was able to eject the spent cartridge and ram a fresh one into the chamber of the .275 rifle, he was at me. Taking my right hand from the rifle I stretched the arm out palm downwards, and as my hand came in contact with his forehead he stopped dead, for no other reason than that my time had not come, for he was big and angry enough to have knocked over and savaged a cart horse. The pig's body had stopped but his head was very active, and as he cut upwards with his great tusks, first on one side and then on the other, fortunately cutting only the air, he wore the skin off the palm of my hand with his rough forehead. Then, for no apparent reason, he turned away, and as he made off I put two bullets into him in quick succession and he pitched forward on his head.

After that one despairing scream Punwa had made no sound or movement, and with the awful thought of what I would say to his mother, and the still more awful thought of what she would say to me, I went with fear and trembling to where he was lying out of sight in the grass, expecting to find him ripped open from end to end. He was laying full stretch on his back, and his eyes were closed, but to my intense relief I saw no blood on his white clothes. I shook him by the shoulder and asked him how he was, and where he had been hurt. In a very weak voice he said he was dead, and that his back was broken.

I straddled his body and gently raised him to a sitting position, and was overjoyed to find that he was able to retain this position when I released my hold. Passing my hand down his back I assured him that it was not broken, and after he had verified this fact with his own hand, he turned his head and looked behind him to where a dry stump was projecting two or three inches above the ground. Evidently he had fainted when the pig knocked him over and, on coming to, feeling the stump boring into his back, had jumped to the conclusion that it was broken.

And so the old pig, son of the shaitan, died, and in dying nearly frightened the lives out of two of us. But beyond rubbing a little skin off my hand he did us no harm, for Punwa escaped without a scratch and with a grand story to tell. The havildar, like the wise old soldier he was, had remained in the background. None the less he claimed a lion's share of the pig, for had he not stood foursquare in reserve to render assistance if assistance had been called for? And further, was it not the custom for those present at a killing to receive a double share, and what difference was there between seeing and hearing the shots that had killed the pig? So a double share was not denied him, and he too, in the course of time, had a grand story to tell of the part he took in that morning's exploit.

Punwa now reigns, and is raising a family, in the house I built for his father. Kunthi has left the village to join her husband, and Sher Singh waits in the Happy Hunting Grounds. Punwa's mother is still alive, and if you stop at the village gate and walk through the fields to Punwa's house you will find her keeping house for Punwa and his family and working as hard

and as cheerfully at her thousand and one tasks as she worked when she first came to our village as Mothi's bride. During the war years Maggie spent the winters alone in our cottage at Kaladhungi, without transport, and fourteen miles from the nearest settlement. Her safety gave me no anxiety, for I knew she was safe among my friends, the poor of India.



## *Pre-Red-Tape Days*

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I WAS camping with Anderson one winter in the Terai, the low-lying stretch of country at the foot of the Himalayas, and having left Bindukhera after breakfast one morning in early January, we made a wide detour to Boksar, our next camping-place, to give our servants time to pack up and pitch our tents before our arrival.

There were two small unbridged rivers to cross between Bindukhera and Boksar, and at the second of these rivers one of the camels carrying our tents slipped on the clay bottom and deposited its load in the river. This accident resulted in a long delay, with the result that we arrived at Boksar, after a very successful day's black partridge shooting, while our kit was still being unloaded from the camels. The camp site was only a few hundred yards from Boksar village, and as Anderson's arrival was a great event, the entire population had turned out to pay their respects to him and to render what assistance they could in setting up our camp.

Sir Frederick Anderson was at that time Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar Government Estates, and by reason of the large amount of the milk of human kindness that he was endowed with he had endeared himself to the large population, embracing all castes and creeds, living in the many thousands of square miles of country he ruled over. In addition to his kindly nature, Anderson was a great administrator and was gifted with a memory which I have only seen equalled in one other man, General Sir Henry Ramsay, who for twenty-eight years administered the same tract of country, and who throughout his service was known as the Uncrowned King of Kumaon. Both Ramsay and Anderson were Scotsmen, and it was said of them that once having heard a name or seen a face they never forgot it. It is only those who have had dealings with simple uneducated people who can realize the value of a good memory, for nothing appeals so much to a humble man as the remembering of his name, or the circumstances in which he has previously been met.

When the history of the rise and fall of British Imperialism is written, due consideration will have to be given to the important part red tape played in the fall of the British raj. Both Ramsay and Anderson served India at a time when red tape was unknown, and their popularity and the success of their administration was in great measure due to their hands' not being tied with it.

Ramsay, in addition to being Judge of Kumaon, was also magistrate, policeman, forest officer, and engineer, and as his duties were manifold and onerous he performed many of them while walking from one camp to another. It was his custom while on these long walks, and while accompanied by a crowd of people, to try all his civil and criminal cases. The complainant and his witnesses were first heard, and then the defendant and his witnesses, and after due deliberation, Ramsay would pronounce judgment, which might be either a fine or a sentence to imprisonment. In no case was his judgment known to be questioned, nor did any man whom he had sentenced to a fine or imprisonment fail to pay the fine into the Government Treasury or fail to report himself at the nearest jail to carry out the term of simple or rigorous imprisonment to which Ramsay had sentenced him. As Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar, Anderson had only to perform a part of the duties that had been performed by his predecessor Ramsay, but he had wide administrative powers, and that afternoon, while our tents were being pitched on the camping ground at Boksar, Anderson told the assembled people to sit down, adding that he would listen to any complaints they had to make and receive any petitions they wished to present.

The first petition came from the headman of a village adjoining Boksar. It appeared that this village and Boksar had a joint irrigation channel that served both villages, and that ran through Boksar. Owing to the partial failure of the monsoon rains, the water in the channel had not been sufficient for both villages and Boksar village had used it all, with the result that the paddy crop of the lower village had been ruined. The headman of Boksar admitted that no water had been allowed to go down the channel to the lower village and justified his action by pointing out that, if the water had been shared, the paddy crops of both villages would have been ruined.

The crop had been harvested and threshed a few days before our arrival, and after Anderson had heard what the two headmen had to say, he ordered that the paddy should be divided up according to the acreage of the two villages. The people of Boksar acknowledged the justice of this decision, but claimed they were entitled to payment of the labour that had been employed in harvesting and threshing the crop. To this claim the lower village objected on the ground that no request had been made to them for help while the Boksar crop was being harvested and threshed. Anderson upheld the objection, and while the two headmen went off to divide the paddy the next petition was presented to him.

This was from Chadi, accusing Kalu of having abducted his wife Tilni. Chadi's complaint was that three weeks previously Kalu had made advances to Tilni; that in spite of his protests Kalu had persisted in his advances; and that ultimately Tilni had left his hut and taken up residence with Kalu. When Anderson asked if Kalu was present, a man sitting at the edge of the semicircle in front of us stood up and said he was Kalu.

While the case of the paddy had been under discussion the assembled women and girls had shown little interest, for that was a matter to be decided by their menfolk. But this abduction case, judging from the expression on their faces and the sharp intakes of breath, was one in which they were all intensely interested.

When Anderson asked Kalu if he admitted the charge that Chadi had brought against him, he admitted that Tilni was living in the hut he had provided for her but he stoutly denied that he had abducted her. When asked if he was prepared to return Tilni to her lawful husband, Kalu replied that Tilni had come to him of her own free will and that he was not prepared to force her to return to Chadi. 'Is Tilni present?' asked Anderson. A girl from among the group of women came forward and said, 'I am Tilni. What does Your Honour want with me?'

Tilni was a clean-limbed attractive young girl, some eighteen years of age. Her hair, done in a foot-high cone in the traditional manner of the women of the Terai, was draped with a white-bordered black sari, her upper

person was encased in a tight-fitting red bodice, and a voluminous gaily coloured skirt completed her costume. When asked by Anderson why she had left her husband, she pointed to Chadi and said, 'Look at him. Not only is he dirty, as you can see, but he is also a miser; and during the two years I have been married to him he has not given me any clothes, nor has he given me any jewellery. These clothes that you are looking at and this jewellery', she said, touching some silver bangles on her wrists, and several strings of glass beads round her neck,' were given to me by Kalu.' Asked if she was willing to go back to Chadi, Tilni tossed her head and said nothing would induce her to do so.

This aboriginal tribe, living in the unhealthy Terai, is renowned for two sterling qualities— cleanliness, and the independence of the women. In no other part of India are villages and the individual dwellings as spotlessly clean as they are in the Terai, and in no other part of India would a young girl have dared or in fact been permitted, to stand before a mixed gathering including two white men to plead her own cause. Chadi was now asked by Anderson if he had any suggestions to make, to which he replied: 'You are my mother and my father. I came to you for justice, and if Your Honour is not prepared to compel my wife to return to me, I claim compensation for her.' 'To what extent do you claim compensation for her?' asked Anderson, to which Chadi replied, 'I claim one hundred and fifty rupees'. From all sides of the semicircle there were now exclamations of 'He claims too much', 'far too much', and 'She is not worth it'. On being asked by Anderson if he was willing to pay one hundred and fifty rupees for Tilni, Kalu said the price demanded was excessive and added that he knew, as everyone in Boksar knew, that Chadi had only paid a hundred rupees for Tilni. This price, he argued, had been paid for Tilni when she was 'new', and as this was no longer the case the most he was willing to pay was fifty rupees. The assembled people now took sides; some maintaining that the sum demanded was too great, while others as vigorously maintained that the sum offered was too small. Eventually, after giving due consideration to the arguments for and against— arguments that went into very minute and very personal details, and to which Tilni listened with an amused smile on her pretty face— Anderson fixed the price of Tilni at seventy-five rupees, and this sum Kalu was ordered to pay Chadi. Opening his waistband, Kalu

produced a string purse, and emptied it on the carpet at Anderson's feet. The contents amounted to fifty-two silver rupees. When two of Kalu's friends had come to his assistance and added another twenty-three rupees, Chadi was told to count the money. When he had done so and stated that the sum was correct, a woman whom I had noticed coming very slowly and apparently very painfully from the direction of the village after all the others were seated and who had sat down a little apart from the rest, got with some difficulty to her feet and said, 'What about me, Your Honour?' 'Who are you?' asked Anderson. 'I am Kalu's wife', she replied.

She was a tall gaunt woman, every drop of blood drained from her ivory-white face, her body-line distorted with an enormous spleen, and her feet swollen—the result of malaria, the scourge of the Terai.

In a tired, toneless voice the woman said that now that Kalu had purchased another wife she would be homeless; and as she had no relatives in the village, and was too ill to work, she would die of neglect and starvation. Then she covered her face with her sari and began to cry silently, great sobs shaking her wasted frame and tears splashing down on her distorted body.

Here was an unexpected and an unfortunate complication, and one that was for Anderson difficult of solution, for while the case had been under discussion there had been no hint that Kalu already had a wife.

The uncomfortable silence following on the woman's pitiful outburst had lasted some time when Tilni, who had remained standing, ran across to the poor weeping woman, and flinging her strong young arms round her said, 'Don't cry, sister, don't cry; and don't say you are homeless, for I will share the new hut Kalu has built for me with you, and I will take care of you and nurse you and one half of all that Kalu gives me I will give you. So don't cry any more, sister, and now come with me and I will take you to our hut.' As Tilni and the sick woman moved off, Anderson stood up and, blowing his nose violently, said the wind coming down from the hills had given him a damned cold, and that the proceedings were closed for the day. The wind coming down from the hills appeared to have affected others in the same



way as it had affected Anderson, for his was not the only nose that was in urgent need of blowing. But the proceedings were not quite over, for Chadi now approached Anderson and asked for the return of his petition. Having torn his petition into small bits, Chadi took the piece of cloth in which he had tied up the seventy-five rupees from his pocket, opened it and said: 'Kalu and I be men of the same village, and as he has now two mouths to feed, one of which requires special food, he will need all his money. So permit me, Your Honour, to return this money to him.'

While touring his domain, Anderson and his predecessors in pre-red-tape days settled to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned hundreds, nay thousands, of cases similar to these, without the contestants being put to one pice of expense. Now, since the introduction of red tape, these cases are taken to courts of law where both the complainant and the defendant are bled white, and where seeds of dissension are sown that inevitably lead to more and more court cases, to the enrichment of the legal profession and the ruin of the poor, simple, honest, hardworking peasantry.



## *The Law of the Jungles*

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HARKWAR and Kunthi were married before their total ages had reached double figures. This was quite normal in the India of those days, and would possibly still have been so had Mahatma Gandhi and Miss Mayo never lived. Harkwar and Kunthi lived in villages a few miles apart at the foot of the great Dunagiri Mountain, and had never seen each other until the great day when, dressed in bright new clothes, they had for all too short a time been the centre of attraction of a vast crowd of relatives and friends. That day lived long in their memories as the wonderful occasion when they had been able to fill their small bellies to bursting-point with halwa and puris. The day also lived for long years in the memory of their respective fathers, for on it the village *bania*, who was their 'father and mother', realizing their great necessity had provided the few rupees that had enabled them to retain the respect of their community by marrying their children at the age that which children should be married, and on the propitious date selected by the priest of the village— and had made a fresh entry against their names in his register.

True, the fifty per cent, interest demanded for the accommodation was excessive, but, God willing, a part of it would be paid, for there were other children yet to be married, and who but the good *bania* was there to help them? Kunthi returned to her father's home after her wedding and for the next few years performed all the duties that children are called upon to perform in the homes of the very poor. The only difference her married state made in her life was that she was no longer permitted to wear the one-piece dress that unmarried girls wear. Her new costume now consisted of three pieces, a chaddar a yard and a half long, one end of which was tucked into her skirt and the other draped over her head, a tiny sleeveless bodice, and a skirt a few inches long.

Several uneventful and care free years went by for Kunthi until the day came when she was judged old enough to join her husband. Once again the *bania* came to the rescue and, arrayed in her new clothes, a very tearful girl-

bride set out for the home of her boy-husband. The change from one home to another only meant for Kunthi the performing of chores for her mother-in-law which she had previously performed for her mother. There are no drones in a poor man's household in India; young and old have their allotted work to do and they do it cheerfully. Kunthi was now old enough to help with the cooking, and as soon as the morning meal had been eaten all who were capable of working for wages set out to perform their respective tasks, which, no matter how minor they were, brought grist to the family mill. Harkwar's father was a mason and was engaged on building a chapel at the American Mission School. It was Harkwar's ambition to follow in his father's profession and, until he had the strength to do so, he helped the family exchequer by carrying the materials used by his father and the other masons, earning two annas a day for his ten hours' labour.

The crops on the low irrigated lands were ripening, and after Kunthi had washed and polished the metal pots and pans used for the morning meal she accompanied her mother-in-law and her numerous sisters-in-law to the fields of the headman of the village, where with other women and girls she laboured as many hours as her husband for half the wage he received. When the day's work was done the family walked back in the twilight to the hut. Harkwar's father had been permitted to build on the headman's land, and with the dry sticks the younger children had collected during their elders' absence, the evening meal was cooked and eaten. Except for the fire, there had never been any other form of illumination in the hut, and when the pots and pans had been cleaned and put away, each member of the family retired to his or her allotted place, Harkwar and his brothers sleeping with their father and Kunthi sleeping with the other female members of the family.

When Harkwar was eighteen and Kunthi sixteen, they left and, carrying their few possessions, set up home in a hut placed at their disposal by an uncle of Harkwar's in a village three miles from the cantonment of Ranikhet. A number of barracks were under construction in the cantonment and Harkwar had no difficulty in finding work as a mason; nor had Kunthi any difficulty in finding work as a labourer, carrying stones from a quarry to the site of the building. For four years the young couple worked on the barracks at Ranikhet, and during this period Kunthi had two children. In

November of the fourth year the buildings were completed and Harkwar and Kunthi had to find new work, for their savings were small and would only keep them in food for a few days.

Winter set in early that year and promised to be unusually severe. The family had no warm clothes, and after a week's unsuccessful search for work Harkwar suggested that they should migrate to the foothills where he heard a canal headworks was being constructed.

So, early in December, the family set out in high spirits on their long walk to the foothills. The distance between the village in which they had made their home for four years and the canal headworks at Kaladhungi, where they hoped to procure work, was roughly fifty miles.

Sleeping under trees at night, toiling up and down steep and rough roads during the day, and carrying all their worldly possessions and the children by turns, Harkwar and Kunthi, tired and footsore, accomplished the journey to Kaladhungi in six days.

Other landless members of the depressed class had migrated earlier in the winter from the high hills to the foothills and built themselves communal huts capable of housing as many as thirty families. In these huts Harkwar and Kunthi were unable to find accommodation, so they had to build a hut for themselves. They chose a site at the edge of the forest where there was an abundant supply of fuel, within easy reach of the bazaar, and laboured early and late on a small hut of branches and leaves, for their supply of hard cash had dwindled to a few rupees and there was no friendly *bania* here to whom they could turn for help.

The forest at the edge of which Harkwar and Kunthi built their hut was a favourite hunting-ground of mine. I had first entered it carrying my old muzzle-loader to shoot red jungle fowl and pea fowl for the family larder, and later I had penetrated to every corner, armed with a modern rifle, in search of big game. At the time Harkwar and Kunthi and their two children, Punwa, a boy aged three, and Putali, a girl aged two, took up their residence in the hut, there were in that forest, to my certain knowledge, five tigers;

eight leopards; a family of four sloth bears; two Himalayan black bears, which had come down from the high hills to feed on wild plums and honey; a number of hyenas who had their burrows in the grasslands five miles away and who visited the forest nightly to feed on the discarded portions of the tigers' and leopards' kills; a pair of wild dogs; numerous jackals and foxes and pine martens; and a variety of civet and other cats.

There were also two pythons, many kinds of snakes, crested and tawny eagles, and hundreds of vultures in the forest. I have not mentioned animals such as deer, antelope, pigs, and monkeys, which are harmless to human beings, for they have no part in my story.

The day after the flimsy hut was completed, Harkwar found work as a qualified mason on a daily wage of eight annas with the contractor who was building the canal headworks, and Kunthi purchased for two rupees a permit from the Forest Department which entitled her to cut grass on the foothills, which she sold as fodder for the cattle of the shopkeepers in the bazaar. For her bundle of green grass weighing anything up to eighty pounds and which necessitated a walk of from ten to fourteen miles, mostly up and down steep hills, Kunthi received four annas, one anna of which was taken by the man who held the Government contract for sale of grass in the bazaar. On the eight annas earned by Harkwar, plus the three annas earned by Kunthi, the family of four lived in comparative comfort, for food was plentiful and cheap and for the first time in their lives they were able to afford one meat meal a month.

Two of the three months that Harkwar and Kunthi intended spending in Kaladhungi passed very peacefully. The hours of work were long, and admitted of no relaxation, but to that they had been accustomed from childhood. The weather was perfect, the children kept in good health, and except during the first few days while the hut was being built they had never gone hungry.

The children had in the beginning been an anxiety, for they were too young to accompany Harkwar to the canal head works, or Kunthi on her long journeys in search of grass. Then a kindly old crippled woman living

in the communal hut a few hundred yards away came to the rescue by offering to keep a general eye on the children while the parents were away at work. This arrangement worked satisfactorily for two months, and each evening when Harkwar returned from the canal headworks four miles away, and Kunthi returned a little later after selling her grass in the bazaar, they found Punwa and Putali eagerly awaiting their return. Friday was fair day in Kaladhungi and on that day everyone in the surrounding villages made it a point to visit the bazaar, where open booths were erected for the display of cheap food, fruit, and vegetables. On these fair days Harkwar and Kunthi returned from work half an hour before their usual time, for if any vegetables had been left over it was possible to buy them at a reduced price before the booths closed down for the night.

One particular Friday, when Harkwar and Kunthi returned to the hut after making their modest purchases of vegetables and a pound of goat's meat, Punwa and Putali were not at the hut to welcome them. On making inquiries from the crippled woman at the communal hut, they learned that she had not seen the children since midday. The woman suggested that they had probably gone to the bazaar to see a merry-go-round that had attracted all the children from the communal hut, and as this seemed a reasonable explanation Harkwar set off to search the bazaar while Kunthi returned to the hut to prepare the evening meal. An hour later Harkwar returned with several men who had assisted him in his search to report that no trace of the children could be found, and that of all the people he had questioned, none admitted having seen them.

At that time a rumour was running through the length and breadth of India of the kidnapping of Hindu children by fakirs, for sale on the north-west frontier for immoral purposes.

What truth there was in this rumour I am unable to say, but I had frequently read in the daily press of fakirs being man handled, and on several occasions being rescued by the police from crowds intent on lynching them. It is safe to say that every parent in India had heard these rumours, and when Harkwar and the friends who had helped him in his search returned to the hut, they communicated their fears to Kunthi that the

children had been kidnapped by fakirs, who had probably come to the fair for that purpose. At the lower end of the village there was a police station in charge of a head constable and two constables. To this police station Harkwar and Kunthi repaired, with a growing crowd of well-wishers. The head constable was a kindly old man who had children of his own, and after he had listened sympathetically to the distracted parents' story, and recorded their statements in his diary, he said -that nothing could be done that night, but that next morning he would send the town crier round to all the fifteen villages in Kaladhungi to announce the loss of the children. He then suggested that if the town crier could announce a reward of fifty rupees, it would greatly assist in the safe return of the children. Fifty rupees! Harkwar and Kunthi were aghast at the suggestion, for they did not know there was so much money in all the world. However when the town crier set out on his round the following morning, he was able to announce the reward, for a man in Kaladhungi who had heard of the head constable's suggestion had offered the money. The evening meal was eaten late that night. The childrens' portion was laid aside, and through out the night a small fire was kept burning, for it was bitterly cold, and at short intervals Harkwar and Kunthi went out into the night to call to their children, though they knew there was no hope of receiving an answer.

At Kaladhungi two roads cross each other at right angles, one running along the foot of the hills from Haldwani to Ramnagar, and the other running from Naini Tal to Bazpur. During that Friday night, sitting close to the small fire to keep themselves warm, Harkwar and Kunthi decided that if the children did not turn up by morning, they would go along the former road and make inquiries, as this was the most likely route for the kidnappers to have taken. At day break on Saturday morning they went to the police station to tell the head constable of their decision, and were instructed to lodge a report at the Haldwani and Ramnagar police stations. They were greatly heartened when the head constable told them that he was sending a letter by mail runner to no less a person than the Inspector of Police at Haldwani, requesting him to telegraph to all railway junctions to keep a look-out for the children, a description of whom he was sending with his letter.

Near sunset that evening Kunthi returned from her twenty-eight-mile walk to Haldwani and went straight to the police station to inquire about her children and to tell the head constable that, though her quest had been fruitless, she had lodged a report as instructed at the Haldwani police station. Shortly afterwards Harkwar returned from his thirty-six-mile walk to Ramnagar, and he too went straight to the police station to make inquiries and to report that he had found no trace of the children, but had carried out the head constable's instructions. Many friends, including a number of mothers who feared for the safety of their own children, were waiting at the hut to express their sympathy for Harkwar and for Punwa's mother—for, as is the custom in India, Kunthi when she married lost the name she had been given at birth, and until Punwa was born had been addressed and referred to as 'Harkwar's wife', and after Punwa's birth as 'Punwa's mother.

Sunday was a repetition of Saturday, with the difference that instead of going east and west, Kunthi went north to Naini Tal while Harkwar went south to Bazpur. The former covered thirty miles, and the latter thirty-two. Starting early and returning at nightfall, the distracted parents traversed many miles of rough roads through dense forests, where people do not usually go except in large parties, and where Harkwar and Kunthi would not have dreamed of going alone had not anxiety for their children overcome their fear of dacoits and of wild animals.

On that Sunday evening, weary and hungry, they returned to their hut from their fruitless visit to Naini Tal and to Bazpur, to be met by the news that the town crier's visit to the villages and the police inquiries had failed to find any trace of the children. Then they lost heart and gave up all hope of ever seeing Punwa and Putali again. The anger of the gods, that had resulted in a fakir being able to steal their children in broad daylight, was not to be explained. Before starting on their long walk from the hills—they had consulted the village priest, and he had selected the propitious day for them to set out on their journey. At every shrine they had passed they had made the requisite offering; at one place, a dry bit of wood, in another a small strip of cloth torn from the hem of Kunthi's chaddar, and in yet another a pice, which they could ill afford. And here, at Kaladhungi, every time they passed the temple that their low caste did not permit them to



enter; they had never failed to raise their clasped hands in supplication. Why then had this great misfortune befallen them, who had done all that the gods demanded of them and who had never wronged any man?

Monday found the pair too dispirited and too tired to leave their hut. There was no food, and would be none until they resumed work. But of what use was it to work now, when the children for whom they had ungrudgingly laboured from morn to night were gone? So, while friends came and went, offering what sympathy they could, Hark-war sat at the door of the hut staring into a bleak and hopeless future, while Kunthi, her tears all gone, sat in a corner, hour after hour, rocking herself to and fro, to and fro.

On that Monday a man of my acquaintance was herding buffaloes in the jungle in which lived the wild animals and birds I have mentioned. He was a simple soul who had spent the greater part of his life in the jungles herding the buffaloes of the headman at Patabpur village. He knew the danger from tigers, and near sundown he collected the buffaloes and started to drive them to the village, along a cattle track that ran through the densest part of the jungle. Presently he noticed that as each buffalo got to a certain spot in the track it turned its head to the right and stopped, until urged on by the horns of the animal following. When he got to this spot he also turned his head to the right, and in a little depression a few feet from the track saw two small children lying.

Man had been in the jungle with his buffaloes when the town crier had made his round of the villages on Saturday, but that night, and the following night also, the kidnapping of Harkwar's children had been the topic of conversation round the village fire, as in fact it had been round every village fire in the whole of Kaladhungi. Here then were the missing children for whom a reward of fifty rupees had been offered.

But why had they been murdered and brought to this remote spot? The children were naked, and were clasped in each other's arms. The herdsman descended into the depression and squatted down on his hunkers to determine, if he could, how the children had met their death. That the

children were dead he was convinced, yet now as he sat closely scrutinizing them he suddenly saw that they were breathing; that in fact they were not dead, but sound asleep. He was a father himself, and very gently he touched the children and roused them. To touch them was a crime against his caste, for he was a Brahmin and they were low-caste children, but what mattered caste in an emergency like this? So, leaving his buffaloes to find their own way home, he picked up the children, who were too weak to walk, and set out for the Kaladhungi bazaar with one on each shoulder. The man was not too strong himself, for like all who live in the foothills he had suffered much from malaria.

The children were an awkward load and had to be held in position. Moreover, as all the cattle tracks and game paths in this jungle run from north to south, and his way lay from east to west, he had to make frequent detours to avoid impenetrable thickets and deep ravines. But he carried on manfully, resting every now and then in the course of his six-mile walk. Putali was beyond speech, but Punwa was able to talk a little and all the explanation he could give for their being in the jungle was that they had been playing and had got lost.

Harkwar was sitting at the door of his hut staring into the darkening night, in which points of light were beginning to appear as a lantern or cooking-fire was lit here and there, when he saw a small crowd of people appearing from the direction of the bazaar. At the head of the procession a man was walking, carrying something on his shoulders. From all sides people were converging on the procession and he could hear an excited murmur of 'Harkwar's children'. Harkwar's children. He could not believe his ears, and yet there appeared to be no mistake, for the procession was coming straight towards his hut.

Kunthi, having reached the limit of her misery and of her physical endurance, had fallen asleep curled up in a corner of the hut. Harkwar shook her awake and got her to the door just as the herdsman carrying Punwa and Putali reached it. When the tearful greetings, and blessings and thanks for the rescuer, and the congratulations of friends had partly subsided, the question of the reward the herdsman had earned was mooted.

To a poor man fifty rupees was wealth, untold, and with it the herdsman could buy three buffaloes or ten cows, and be independent for life. But the rescuer was a better man than the crowd gave him credit for. The blessings and thanks that had been showered on his head that night, he said, was reward enough for him, and he stoutly refused to touch one pice of the fifty rupees. Nor would Harkwar or Kunthi accept the reward either as a gift or a loan. They had got back the children they had lost all hope of ever seeing again, and would resume work as their strength returned. In the meantime the milk and sweets and *puris* that one and another of the assembled people, out of the goodness of their hearts, had run to the bazaar to fetch would be amply sufficient to sustain them.

Two-year-old Putali and three-year-old Punwa were lost at midday on Friday, and were found by the herdsman at about 5 p.m. on Monday, a matter of seventy-seven hours. I have given a description of the wild life which to my knowledge was in the forest in which the children spent those seventy-seven hours, and it would be unreasonable to assume that none of the animals or birds saw, heard, or smelt the children. And yet, when the herdsman put Putali and Punwa into their parents' arms, there was not a single mark of tooth or claw on them. I once saw a tigress stalking a month-old kid. The ground was very open and the kid saw the tigress while she was still some distance away and started bleating, where on the tigress gave up her stalk and walked straight up to it. When the tigress had approached to within a few yards, the kid went forward to meet her, and on reaching the tigress stretched out its neck and put up its head to smell her. For the duration of a few heart beats the month-old kid and the Queen of the Forest stood nose to nose, and 'then the queen turned and walked off in the direction from which she had come.

Illustration from the 1952 Readers Digest condensed printing of the chapter 'Law of the Jungle' from My India.

When Hitler's war was nearing its end, in one week I read extracts from speeches of three of the greatest men in the British Empire, condemning war atrocities, and accusing the enemy of attempting to introduce the 'law of the jungle' into the dealings of warring man and man. Had the Creator

made the same law for man as He has made for the jungle folk, there would be no wars, for the strong in man would have the same consideration for the weak as is the established law of the jungles.



## *The Brothers*

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THE long years of training boys for jungle warfare were over, and we were sitting one morning after breakfast on the veranda of our cottage at Kaladhungi. My sister Maggie was knitting a khaki pullover for me, and I was putting the finishing touches to a favourite fly-rod that suffered from years of disuse, when a man wearing a clean but much-patched cotton suit walked up the steps of the veranda with a broad grin on his face, salaamed, and asked if we remembered him.

Many people, clean and not so clean, old and young, rich and poor (but mostly poor), Hindus, Mohammedans, and Christians, walked up those steps, for our cottage was at a cross-roads at the foot of the hills and on the border line between the cultivated land and the forest. All who were sick or sorry, in want of a helping hand, or in need of a little human companionship and a cup of tea, whether living on the cultivated land or working in the forest or just passing on their way from one place to another, found their way to our cottage. Had a record been maintained over the years of only the sick and injured treated, it would have had thousands of names in it. And the cases dealt with would have covered every ailment that human flesh is heir to— and subject to, when living in an unhealthy area, working in forests on dangerous jobs among animals who occasionally lose their tempers.

There was the case of the woman who came one morning and complained that her son had great difficulty in eating the linseed poultice that had been given to her the previous evening to apply on a boil: as the poultice did not appear to have done the boy any good, she asked to have the medicine changed. And the case of the old Mohammedan woman who came late one evening, with tears streaming down her face, and begged Maggie to save her husband who was dying of pneumonia. She looked a glance at the tablets of M. & B. 693 and asked if that was all that was to be given to a dying man to make him well; but next day she returned with a beaming countenance to report that her husband had recovered, and begged

for the same kind of medicine for the four friends she had brought with her, each of whom had husbands as old as hers who might at any time get pneumonia. And there was the case of the girl about eight years old, who, after some difficulty in reaching the latch of the gate, marched up to the veranda firmly holding the hand of a boy some two years younger, and asked for medicine for the boy's sore eyes. She sat herself down on the ground, made the boy lie on his back, and having got his head between her knees said, 'Now, Miss Sahib, you can do anything you like to him.' This girl was the daughter of the headman of a village six miles away. Seeing her class mate suffering from sore eyes, she had taken it upon herself to bring him to Maggie for treatment, and for a whole week, until his eyes were quite well, the young Samaritan brought the boy to the cottage, though in order to do so she had to walk an additional four miles each day. Then there was the case of the sawyer from Delhi, who limped into the compound one day with his right leg ripped open by the tusk of a pig from his heel to the back of his knee. All the time his leg was being attended to he swore at the unclean beast that had done this terrible thing to him, for he was a follower of the Prophet. His story was that when that morning he had approached the tree he had felled the previous day, to saw it up, a pig which had been sheltering among the branches ran against him and cut his leg. When I suggested that it was his own fault for having got in the way of the pig, he indignantly exclaimed: 'With the whole jungle to run about in, what need was there for it to have run against me when I had done nothing, to offend it, and in fact before I had even seen it?'

There was another sawyer too. While turning over a log he had been stung on the palm of his hand by a scorpion 'as big as this'. After treatment, he rolled on the ground loudly lamenting his fate and asserting that the medicine was doing him no good, but not long after he was observed to be holding his sides and choking with laughter. It was the day of the children's annual fete, and when the races had been run and the two hundred children and their mothers had been fed on sweets and fruit, a circle had been formed. A blindfolded boy had been set to break a paper bag containing nuts of all kinds, which was slung between two bamboos held upright by two men; and it was when the boy brought his stick down on the head of one of these men that the scorpion patient was found to be laughing the

loudest of all the assembly. When asked how the pain now was, the man replied that it had gone, and that in any case he would not mind how many scorpions stung him provided he could take part in a tamasha like this.

The members of our family have been amateur physicians for more years than I can remember, and as Indians, especially the poorer ones, have long memories, and never forget a kindness no matter how trivial it may have been, not all the people who walked up the steps of our cottage at Kaladhungi were patients. Many there were who had marched for days over rough tracks in all weathers to thank us for small kindnesses shown to them, maybe the previous year, or maybe many years previously.

One of these was a sixteen-year-old boy, who with his mother had been housed for some days in our village while Maggie treated his mother for influenza and badly inflamed eyes; now he had done a march of many days to bring Maggie his mother's thanks and a present of a few pomegranates which his mother had picked for her 'with her own hand'. And only that day, an hour before the man wearing the patched suit had arrived, an old man had walked up the steps and seated himself on the veranda with his back to one of the pillars and, after looking at me for some time, had shaken his head in a disapproving manner and said, 'You are looking much older, Sahib, than you were when I last saw you.' 'Yes', I replied, 'all of us are apt to look older after ten years.' 'Not all of us, Sahib,' he rejoined, 'for I look and feel no older than when I last sat in your veranda not ten, but twelve years ago. On that occasion I was returning on foot from a pilgrimage to Badrinath, and seeing your gate open, and being tired and in urgent need of ten rupees, I asked you to let me rest for a while, and appealed to you for help. I am now returning from another pilgrimage, this time to the sacred city of Benares. I am in no need of money and have only come to thank you for the help you gave me before and to tell you that I got home safely. After this smoke, and a little rest, I shall return to rejoin my family, whom I left at Haldwani.' A fourteen-mile walk each way. And in spite of his assertion that twelve years had not made him look or feel any older, he was a frail old man.

Though the face of the man in the patched cotton suit who now stood before us on the veranda was vaguely familiar, we could not remember his name or the circumstances in which we had last seen him. Seeing that he was not recognized, the man removed his coat, opened his shirt, and exposed his chest and right shoulder. That shoulder brought him to instant memory. He was Narwa. Narwa the basket-maker, and there was some excuse for our not having recognized him, for when we had last seen him, six years previously, he was mere skin and bone; only with great difficulty had he been able to put one foot before another, and he had needed a stick to support himself. Looking now at his misshapen shoulder, the crushed and broken bones of which had calloused without being set, the puckered and discoloured skin of his chest and back, and his partially withered right arm, we who for three months had watched his gallant fight for life marvelled how well he had survived his ordeal. Moving his arm up and down, and closing and opening his hand, Narwa said that his arm was getting stronger every day. His fingers had not got stiff, as we feared they would, so he had been able to resume his trade. His object now, he said, was to show us that he was quite well and to thank Maggie — which he proceeded to do by putting his head on her feet— for having supplied all his wants, and the wants of his wife and child, during the months he had lain between life and death.

### *Narwa's Ordeal*

Narwa and Haria were not blood brothers, though they so described themselves. They had been born and had grown up in the same village near Almora, and when old enough to work had adopted the same profession, basket-making— which means that they were untouchables, for in the United Provinces baskets are only made by untouchables. During the summer months Narwa and Haria worked at their trade in their village near Almora, and in the winter months they came down to Kaladhungi where there was a great demand for the huge baskets, measuring up to fifteen feet in diameter, which they made for our villagers for the storage of grain. In their hill village near Almora they made their baskets of ringals— thin bamboo an inch thick and up to twenty feet long, which grows at an altitude



of four to ten thousand feet, and which incidentally makes the most perfect of fly- rods — and in Kaladhungi they made them of bamboos.

The bamboos in Kaladhungi grow in the Government Reserved Forests, and we who cultivate land near the Reserved Forests are permitted to cut a certain number each year for our personal use. But people who use the bamboos for commercial purposes have to take out a licence from the forest guard of the area, paying two annas per headload, and a small consideration to the forest guard for his trouble in filling in the licence. As the licence is a personal one and covers an individual headload it is safe to assume that as many lengths of two-year-old bamboos— the age when a bamboo is best for basket-making— were included in the load as a man could carry.

At daybreak on the morning of 26 December 1939 Narwa and Haria set out from their communal hut near the bazaar at Kaladhungi to walk eight miles to Nalni village, obtain a licence from the forest guard, cut two headloads of bamboos in the Nalni Reserved Forests, and return to Kaladhungi the same evening. It was bitterly cold when they started, so the two men wrapped coarse cotton sheets round their shoulders to keep out the cold. For a mile their way ran along the canal bank. Then, after negotiating the series of high walls which form the headworks of the canal, they took a footpath which runs alternately through patches of dense scrub jungle and over long stretches of the boulder-strewn bank of the Boar river, stretches where a pair of otters are usually to be seen in the early morning, and where, when the sun is on the water, *mahseer* up to three or four pounds can be taken on a fly-rod. Two miles up they crossed by a shallow ford from the right to the left bank of the river and entered a tree and grass jungle, where morning and evening are to be seen several small herds of chital and sambhar, and an occasional kakar, leopard, or tiger. A mile through this jungle, they came to where the hills converge, and where some years previously Robin picked up the tracks of the Bachelor of Powalgarh. From this point onwards the valley opens out and is known to all who graze cattle, or who poach or shoot in the area, as Samal Chour. In this valley one has to walk warily, for the footpath is used almost as much by tigers as it is by human beings.

At the upper end of the valley the footpath, before going steeply up the hill for two miles to Nalni village, passes through a strip of grass. This strip of eight-foot grass is thirty yards wide and extends for about fifty yards on either side of the path. In anticipation of the stiff climb up the Nalni hill, shortly before reaching the grass Narwa divested himself of his cotton sheet, folded it small and placed it on his right shoulder. Haria was leading, with Narwa following a few steps behind, and he had only gone three or four yards into the grass when he heard the angry roar of a tiger, and simultaneously a shriek from Narwa. Haria turned and dashed back, and on the open ground at the edge of the grass he saw Narwa on his back with a tiger lying diagonally across him. Narwa's feet were nearest to him, and grasping an ankle in each hand he started to pull him away from under the tiger. As he did this the tiger stood up, turned towards him and started to growl. After dragging Narwa along on his back for a short distance Haria got his arms round him and set him on his feet. But Narwa was too badly injured and shaken to stand or walk, so Haria put his arms round him, and alternately dragged and carried him— while the tiger continued to growl— through the open ground skirting the grass, and so regained the path to Nalni village. By superhuman efforts Haria eventually got Narwa to Nalni, where it was found that in spite of the folded sheet which he had been carrying on his right shoulder, and which Haria had retrieved while pulling him away, the tiger had crushed the bones of the shoulder, lacerated the flesh, and exposed the bones on the right side of the chest and back. All four of the tiger's canine teeth had penetrated some eight folds of the sheet, and but for this obstruction they would have met in Narwa's chest and inflicted a fatal wound. The forest guard and the people of Nalni were unable to do anything for Narwa, so Haria hired a pack pony for two rupees, mounted Narwa on it, and set out for Kaladhungi. The distance, as I have already said, was eight miles, but Haria was unwilling to face the tiger a second time so he made a wide detour through Musabanga village, adding ten miles to Narwa's agonizing journey. There were no saddles at Nalni and he had been mounted on a hard pack used for carrying grain, and the first nine miles of his ride was over incredibly steep and rough ground.

Maggie was having tea on the veranda of our cottage when Narwa, soaked in blood and being held on the pony by Haria, arrived at the steps. A

glance was enough to show that the case was one she could not deal with, so she quickly gave Narwa a stiff dose of sal volatile— for he was on the point of fainting— and made a sling for his arm. Then she tore up a bed sheet to be used for bandages and wrote a note to the Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Kaladhungi hospital, begging him to attend to Narwa immediately, and do all he could for him. She gave the note to our head boy and sent him to the hospital with the two men.

I was out bird shooting that day with a party of friends who were spending their Christmas holiday at Kaladhungi, and when I returned in the late evening Maggie told me about Narwa. Early next morning I was at the hospital, where I was informed by a very young and very inexperienced doctor that he had done all he could for Narwa, but as he had little hope of his recovery, and no arrangements for in-patients, he had sent Narwa home after treating him.

In the large communal hut, which housed about twenty families, each of which appeared to have a record number of small children, I found Narwa lying in a corner on a bed of straw and leaves. It was the last place for a man in his terrible condition to be in, for his wounds were showing signs of getting septic. For a week Narwa lay in the corner of the noisy and insanitary hut, at times raving in high fever, at times in a state of coma, watched over by his weeping wife, and his devoted ‘brother’ Haria, and by other friends. It was now apparent, even to my inexperienced eyes, that if Narwa’s septic wounds were not opened up, drained, and cleaned, there was a certainty of the doctor’s predictions being fulfilled, so, after making arrangements for his care while under treatment, I removed him to the hospital. To give the young doctor credit, when he undertook to do job he did it thoroughly, and many of the long scars on his chest and back that Narwa will carry to the burning-ghat were made not by the tiger but by the doctor’s lancet, which he used very freely.

With the exception of professional beggars, the poor in India can only eat when they work, and as Narwa’s wife’s days were fully occupied in visiting him at the hospital, and later in nursing him when he returned to the communal hut, and in caring for her three-year-old girl and her young baby,

Maggie supplied all Narwa's wants (Small hospitals in India do not provide either attendants or food for patients.), and the wants of his family. Three months later, reduced to skin and bone and with a right arm that looked as though it could never be used again, Narwa crawled from the hut to our cottage to bid us goodbye and the next day he and Haria and their families set out for their village near Almora.

After visiting Narwa in the communal hut that first morning, and getting a firsthand account of the incident from Haria, I was convinced that the tiger's encounter with Narwa was accidental. However, to satisfy myself that my reconstruction of the event was right—and to shoot the tiger if I was wrong—I followed, foot by foot, the track the brothers had taken the previous day when on their way to Nalni village. For a few yards the track runs along the edge of the strip of high grass at the foot of the Nalni hill, before turning at right angles to cross the grass. Shortly before the two men arrived at this spot, the tiger had killed a *sambhar* stag and carried it into the grass close to the right-hand side of the track. When Haria entered the grass the tiger heard the rustling, and coming out, ran into Narwa, who was a few yards behind Haria and a yard or two from the turning. The encounter was accidental, for the grass was too thick and too high for the tiger to have seen Narwa before he bumped into him. Furthermore it had made no attempt to savage Narwa, and had even allowed Haria to drag the man on whom it was lying away from under it. So the tiger was allowed to live, and was later induced to join the party of tigers that are mentioned in the chapter 'Just Tigers' in *Man-eaters of Kumaon*.

Of all the brave deeds that I have witnessed, or that I have read or heard about, I count Haria's rescue of Narwa the greatest. Unarmed and alone in a great expanse of jungle, to respond to the cry of a companion in distress and to pull that companion away from an angry tiger that was lying on him, and then to drag and carry that companion for two miles up a steep hill to a place of safety, not knowing but that the tiger was following, needed a degree of courage that is given to few, and that any man could envy. When I took down Haria's statement—which was later corroborated in every detail by Narwa—with the object, unknown to him, of his act receiving recognition, so far from thinking that he had done anything deserving of

commendation, after I had finished questioning him he said: 'I have not done anything, Sahib, have I, that is likely to bring trouble on me or on my brother Narwa?'

And Narwa, a few days later, when I took down what I feared would be his dying declaration, said in a voice racked with pain and little above a whisper, 'Don't let my brother get into any trouble, Sahib, for it was not his fault that the tiger attacked me, and he risked his life to save mine'. I should have liked to have been able to end my story by telling you that Haria's brave act, and Narwa's heroic fight for life against great odds, had been acknowledged by a certificate of merit, or some other small token of award, for both were poor men. Unfortunately red tape proved too much for me, for the Government was not willing to make any award in a case of which the truth could not be sworn to by independent and unbiased witnesses.

So one of the bravest deeds ever performed has gone unrecognized because there were no 'independent and unbiased witnesses'; and of the brothers Haria is the poorer of the two, for he has nothing to show for the part he played, while Narwa has his scars and the sheet with many holes, stained with his blood.

For many days I toyed with the idea of appealing to His Majesty the King, but with a world war starting and all it implied I very reluctantly abandoned the idea.



## *Sultana: India's Robin Hood*

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**I**N a country as vast as India, with its great areas of forest land and bad communications, and with its teeming population chronically on the verge of starvation, it is easy to understand the temptations to embark on a life of crime, and the difficulty the Government have in rounding up criminals. In addition to the ordinary criminals to be found in all countries, there are in India whole tribes classed as criminals who are segregated in settlements set apart for them by the Government and subjected to a greater or lesser degree of restraint according to the crimes they specialize in. While I was engaged on welfare work during a part of the last war, I frequently visited one of these criminal settlements. The inmates were not kept under close restraint, and I had many interesting talks with them and with the Government representative in charge of the settlement. In an effort to wean this tribe from a life of crime the Government had given them, free of rent, a large tract of alluvial land on the left bank of the Jumna river in the Meerut District. This rich land produced bumper crops of sugarcane, wheat, barley, rape seed, and other cereals, but crime persisted. The Government representative blamed the girls, who, he said, refused to marry any but successful criminals. The tribe specialized in robbery, and there were old men in the settlement who trained the younger generation on a profit-sharing basis.

Men were allowed to leave the settlement on ticket of leave for stated periods, but women were not permitted to leave. The elders of the tribe strictly enforced three rules: first, that all robberies were to be carried out single-handed ; second, that the scene of the crime was to be as distant from the settlement as possible; and third, that violence while committing the crime was not to be resorted to in any circumstances.

The method invariably adopted by a young man, after he had completed his training, was to secure employment as a house servant with a rich man in Calcutta, Bombay, or some other distant city, and when opportunity offered to rob his master of articles which could be easily secreted, such as

gold, jewellery, or precious stones. On one occasion while I was paying a number of young men who had been driving black partridge out of a sugarcane field for me, the Government representative informed me that the young man into whose hands I had just dropped his wage of eight annas, plus two annas for a runner he had retrieved, had returned to the settlement a few days previously, after an absence of a year, with a diamond worth thirty thousand rupees.

After valuation by the experts of the tribe the diamond had been hidden, and the most sought-after girl in the settlement had promised to marry the successful criminal during the next marriage season. Another of the men standing near by, who had not taken part in the partridge drive, had conceived the novel plan of impressing the girl of his choice by driving up to the settlement, along a most appalling cart-track, in a new motor-car he had stolen in Calcutta. In order to carry out his plan he had first had to pay for driving lessons. Some members of criminal tribes who are not subjected to strict control find employment as night watch men in private houses, and I know of instances where it was a sufficient guarantee against theft for the watchman to place a pair of his shoes on the door step of the house in which he was employed. This may savour of blackmail, but it was cheap blackmail, for the wages paid varied from three to five rupees a month, according to the standing of the criminal, and the money was easily earned as all the watchman had to do was to place his shoes in position at night, and remove them again the next morning. Owing to their preference for violent crime the Bhantus were one of the criminal tribes in the United Provinces that were kept under strict restraint, and Sultana, the famous dacoit who for three years defied all the Government's efforts to capture him, was a member of this tribe. It is about Sultana that this story is written.

When I first knew it, Naya Gaon was one of the most nourishing villages in the Terai and Bhabar—the tract of land running along the foothills of the Himalayas. Every yard of the rich soil, carved out of virgin forest, was under intensive cultivation, and the hundred or more tenants were prosperous, contented, and happy. Sir Henry Ramsay, the King of Kumaon, had brought these hardy people down from the Himalayas, and for a generation they retained their vigour and flourished exceedingly.

Malaria at that time was known as 'Bhabar fever', and the few doctors, scattered over a wide area, who were responsible for the health of the people, had neither the ability nor the means to cope with this scourge of the foothills. Naya Gaon, situated in the heart of the forest, was one of the first villages in the Bhabar to be decimated by the disease. Field after field went out of cultivation as the tenants died, until only a handful of the sturdy pioneers were left, and when these survivors were given land in our village Naya Gaon reverted to jungle.

Only once in later years was an attempt made to recultivate the land, the intrepid pioneer on this occasion being a doctor from the Punjab; but when first his daughter, then his wife, and finally he himself died of malaria, Naya Gaon for the second time went back to the jungle.

On the land which had been cleared with great labour, on which bumper crops of sugarcane, wheat, mustard, and rice had been grown, luxuriant grass sprang up. Attracted by this rich feed, the cattle from our village three miles away adopted the deserted fields of Naya Gaon as their regular feeding ground. When cattle graze for long periods over open ground surrounded by jungle they invariably attract carnivora, and I was not surprised to hear one year, on our descent from our summer home in Naini Tal to our winter home in Kaladhungi, that a leopard had taken up residence in the jungles adjoining the grazing-ground and that he was taking heavy toll of our cattle. There were no trees on the grassland in which I could sit over a kill, so I determined to shoot the leopard either in the early morning, when he was on his way to lie up in thick cover for the day, or in the evening, when he was returning to a kill or intent on making a fresh one. For either of these plans to be effective it was necessary to discover in what part of the surrounding jungles the leopard had made his home, so early one morning Robin and I set out to glean this information.

Naya Gaon— for though the land has been out of cultivation for many years it retains its name to this day— is bounded on the north by the road known as the Kandi Sarak, and on the east by the old Trunk Road which before the advent of railways connected the plains of the United Provinces with the interior of Kumaon.



To the south and west, Naya Gaon is bounded by dense jungle. Both the Kandi Sarak and the Trunk Road are little used in these days and I decided to try them first before trying the more difficult ground to the south and west. At the junction of the roads, where in the days gone by a police guard was posted for the protection of wayfarers against dacoits, Robin and I found the tracks of a female leopard. This leopard was well known to Robin and me, for she had lived for several years in a heavy patch of Iantana at the lower end of our village. Apart from never molesting our cattle, she had kept pigs and monkeys from damaging our crops, so we ignored her tracks and carried on along the Trunk Road in the direction of Garuppu. There had been no traffic on the road since the previous evening, and the tracks of animals who had used or crossed it were registered on the dusty surface.

From the rifle in my hands Robin, who was a wise dog and my constant companion, knew we were not after birds so he paid no attention to the pea fowl that occasionally scurried across the road or to the jungle fowl that were scratching up the dead leaves at the side of it, but concentrated on the tracks of a tigress and her two half-grown cubs that had gone down the road an hour ahead of us. In places the wide road was overgrown with short dub grass. On this dew-drenched grass the cubs had rolled and tumbled, and Robin filled his nostrils to his heart's content with the sweet and terrifying smell of tiger. The family had kept to the road for a mile and had then gone east along a game track. Three miles from the junction, and two miles above Garuppu, a well-used game track coming from the direction of Naya Gaon crosses the road diagonally, and on this track we saw the fresh pug marks of a big male leopard.

We had found what we were looking for. This leopard had come from the grazing ground and crossed the road. It was capable of killing a full-grown cow and there were not likely to be two leopards of this size in the same area. Robin was keen on following up the tracks, but the dense scrub jungle the leopard was making for—the same jungle in which Kunwar Singh and Har Singh had nearly lost their lives some years previously—was not suitable for stalking an animal with the sight and hearing of a leopard. Moreover, I had a better and simpler plan of making contact with the leopard, so we turned about and made for home and breakfast.

After lunch Robin and I, accompanied by Maggie, retraced our steps down the Garuppu road. The leopard had not killed any of our cattle the previous day but he might have killed a chital or a pig which shared the grazing ground with the cattle; and even if he had no kill to return to there was a very good chance of his visiting his regular hunting ground. So Maggie and I, with Robin lying between us, took up position behind a bush on the side of the road, a hundred yards from the game track along which the leopard had gone that morning. We had been in position about an hour, listening to the multitude of bird calls, when a peacock in full plumage majestically crossed the road and went down the game path. A little later, ten or a dozen chital, in the direction of the heavy jungle in which we expected the leopard to be lying up, warned the jungle folk of the presence of a leopard. Ten minutes thereafter, and a little nearer to us, a single chital repeated the warning. The leopard was on the move and coming in our direction, and as he was making no attempt to conceal himself he was probably on his way to a kill. Robin had lain with chin on outstretched paws without movement, listening as we were to what the jungle folk had to say, and when he saw me draw up my leg and rest the rifle on my knee, his body, which was against my left leg, started to tremble. The spotted killer, whom he feared more than any other beast in the jungle would presently put its head out of the bushes and, after looking up and down the road, would come towards us. Whether it died in its tracks, or roared and tumbled about with a mortal wound, he would remain perfectly still and silent, for he was taking part in a game with every move of which he was familiar, and which was as fascinating as it was terrifying.

After going a short distance down the game path the peacock had climbed into the branches of a plum tree and was busily engaged in eating ripe fruit. Suddenly it sprang into the air with a harsh scream and alighted on the limb of a dead tree, adding its warning to that already given by the chital. A few minutes now, five at the most, for the leopard would approach the road very cautiously, and then out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of a movement far down the road. It was a man running, and every now and then, without slackening his pace, he looked over his shoulder behind him. To see a man on that road at this hour of the evening—the sun was near setting—was very unusual, and to see him alone was even more unusual.

Every stride the man took lessened our chances of bagging the leopard. However, that could not be helped, for the runner was evidently in great distress, and possibly in need of help. I recognized him while he was still some distance from us; he was a tenant in a village adjoining ours who during the winter months was engaged as herdsman at a cattle station three miles east of Garuppu.

On catching sight of us the runner started violently, but when he recognized me he came towards us and in a very agitated voice said, 'Run, Sahib, run for your life! Sultana's men are after me.'

He was winded and in great distress. Taking no notice of my invitation to sit down and rest, he turned his leg and said, 'See what they have done to me! If they catch me they will surely kill me and you also, if you do not run.' The leg he turned for our inspection was slashed from the back of the knee to the heel, and dust-clotted blood was flowing from the ugly wound. Telling the man that if he would not rest there was at least no need for him to run any more, I moved out of the bushes to where I could get a clear view down the road, while the man limped off in the direction of his village. Neither the leopard nor Sultana's men showed up, and when there was no longer light for accurate shooting, Maggie and I, with a very disgusted Robin at our heels, returned to our home at Kaladhungi.

Next morning I got the man's story. He was grazing his buffaloes between Garuppu and the cattle station when he heard a gunshot. The nephew of the headman of his village had arrived at the cattle station at dawn that morning with the object of poaching a chital, and while he had been sitting in the shade of a tree, speculating as to whether the shot had been effective or not and, if effective, whether a portion of the venison would be left at the cattle station for his evening meal, he heard a rustle behind him. Looking round, he saw five men standing over him. He was told to get up and take the party to where the gun had been fired. When he said he had been asleep and had not heard the shot he was ordered to lead the way to the cattle station, to which they thought the gunman would probably go. The party had no firearms, but the man who appeared to be

their leader had a naked sword in his hand and said he would cut the herdsman's head off with it if he attempted to run away or shout a warning.

As they made their way through the jungle the swordsman informed the herdsman that they were members of Sultana's gang and that Sultana was camped near by. When he heard the shot Sultana had ordered them to bring him the gun. Therefore if they met with any opposition at the cattle station they would burn it down and kill their guide. This threat presented my friend with a dilemma. His companions at the cattle station were a tough lot, and if they offered resistance he would undoubtedly be killed; on the other hand, if they did not resist, his crime in leading the dread Sultana's men to the station would never be forgotten or forgiven. While these unpleasant thoughts were running through his head a chital stag pursued by a pack of wild dogs came dashing through the jungle and passed within a few yards of them. Seeing that his escort had stopped and were watching the chase the herdsman dived into the high grass on the side of the path and, despite the wound he received on his leg as the swordsman tried to cut him down, he had managed to shake his pursuers off and gain the Trunk Road, where in due course he ran into us while we were waiting for the leopard.

Sultana was a member of the Bhamtu criminal tribe. With the rights and wrongs of classing a tribe as 'criminal' and confining it within the four walls of the Najibabad Fort I am not concerned. It suffices to say that Sultana, with his young wife and infant son and some hundreds of other Bhamtus, was confined in the fort under the charge of the Salvation Army. Chafing at his confinement, he scaled the mud walls of the fort one night and escaped, as any young and high-spirited man would have done. This escape had been effected a year previous to the opening of my story and during that year Sultana had collected a hundred kindred spirits, all armed with guns, around him. This imposing gang, whose declared object was dacoity, led a roving life in the jungles of the Terai and Bhamar, their activities extending from Gonda in the east to Saharanpur in the west, a distance of several hundred miles, with occasional raids into the adjoining province of the Punjab.

There are many fat files in Government offices on the activities of Sultana and his gang of dacoits. I have not had access to these files, and if my story, which only deals with events in which I took part or events which came to my personal notice, differs or conflicts in any respects with Government reports I can only express my regret. At the same time I do not retract one word of my story. I first heard of Sultana when he was camping in the Garuppu jungles a few miles from our winter home at Kaladhungi. Percy Wyndham was at that time Commissioner of Kumaon, and as the Terai and Bhabar forests in which Sultana had apparently established himself were in Wyndham's charge he asked Government for the services of Freddy Young, a keen young police officer with a few years' service in the United Provinces to his credit. The Government granted Wyndham's request, and sanctioned the creation of a Special Dacoity Police Force of three hundred picked men. Freddy was put in supreme command of this force and given a free hand in the selection of his men. He earned a lot of unpopularity by building up his force with the best men from adjoining districts, for Sultana was a coveted prize and their own officers resented having to surrender men who might have helped them to acquire the prize.

While Freddy was mustering his force, Sultana was getting his hand in by raiding small townships in the Terai and Bhabar. Freddy's first attempt to capture Sultana was made in the forests west of Ramnagar. The Forest Department were felling a portion of these forests, employing a large labour force, and one of the contractors in charge of the labour was induced to invite Sultana, who was known to be camping in the vicinity, to a dance to be followed by a feast. Sultana and his merry men accepted the invitation, but just before the festivities began they prevailed on their host to make a slight alteration in the programme and have the feast first and the dance later. Sultana said his men would enjoy the dance more on full stomachs than on empty ones. Here it is necessary to interrupt my story to explain for the benefit of those who have never been in the East that guests at a dance, or a 'nautch' as it is called here, do not take any part in the proceedings. The dancing is confined to a troop of professional dancing-girls and their male orchestra. Funds in plenty were available on both sides and, as money goes as far in the East towards buying information as it does in the West, one of the first moves of the two contestants in the game that was to be

played was the organization of efficient secret services. Here Sultana had the advantage, for whereas Freddy could only reward for services rendered, Sultana could not only reward but could also punish for information withheld, or for information about his movements to the police, and when his method of dealing with offenders became known none were willing to court his displeasure.

Having known what it was to be poor, really poor, during his long years of confinement in the Najibabad Fort, Sultana had a warm corner in his heart for all poor people. It was said of him that, throughout his career as a dacoit, he never robbed a pice from a poor man, never refused an appeal for charity, and paid twice the price asked for all he purchased from small shopkeepers. Little wonder then that his intelligence staff numbered hundreds and that he knew the invitation he had received to the dance and feast had been issued at Freddy's instigation.

Meanwhile plans were on foot for the great night. The contractor, reputed to be a rich man, extended invitations to his friends in Ramnagar and in Kashipur; the best dancing-girls and their orchestras were engaged, and large quantities of eatables and drink—the latter specially for the benefit of the dacoits—were purchased and transported by bullock cart to the camp.

At the appointed time on the night that was to see the undoing of Sultana, the contractor's guests assembled and the feast began. It is possible that the contractor's friends did not show who their fellow guests were, for on these occasions the different castes sit in groups by themselves and the illumination provided by firelight and a few lanterns was of the poorest. Sultana and his men ate and drank wisely and well, and when the feast was nearing its end the dacoit leader led his host aside, thanked him for his hospitality, and said that as he and his men had a long way to go he regretted they could not stay for the dance. Before leaving, however, he requested—and Sultana's requests were never disregarded—that the festivities should continue as had been arranged.

The principal instrument of music at a nautch is a drum, and the sound of the drums was to be Freddy's signal to leave the position he had taken up

and deploy his force to surround the camp. One section of this force was led by a forest guard, and the night being dark the forest guard lost his way. This section, which was to have blocked Sultana's line of retreat, remained lost for the remainder of the night. As a matter of fact the forest guard, who had to live in the forest with Sultana and was a wise man, need not have given himself the trouble of getting lost, for by his request for a slight alteration in the programme Sultana had given himself ample time to get clear of the net before the signal was given. So all that the attacking force found when they arrived at the camp, after a long and a difficult march through dense forest, was a troop of frightened girls, their even more frightened orchestra, and the mystified friends of the contractor. After his escape from the Ramnagar forests Sultana paid a visit to the Punjab. Here, with no forests in which to shelter, he was out of his element and after a brief stay, which yielded a hundred thousand rupees' worth of gold ornaments, he returned to the dense jungles of the United Provinces. On his way back from the Punjab he had to cross the Ganges canal, the bridges over which are spaced at intervals of four miles, and as his movements were known, the bridges he was likely to cross were heavily guarded. Avoiding these, Sultana made for a bridge which his intelligence staff informed him was not guarded, and on his way passed close to a large village in which a band was playing Indian music. On learning from his guides that a rich man's son was being married, he ordered them to take him to the village.

The wedding party and some thousand guests were assembled on a wide open space in the centre of the village. As he entered the glare of the high-powered lamps Sultana's appearance caused a stir, but he requested the assembly to remain seated and added that if they complied with his request they had nothing to fear. He then summoned the headman of the village and the father of the bridegroom and made it known that, as this was a propitious time for the giving and receiving of gifts, he would like the headman's recently purchased gun for himself and ten thousand rupees in cash for his men. The gun and the money were produced in the shortest time possible, and having wished the assembly good night Sultana led his men out of the village. Not till the following day did he learn that his lieutenant, Pailwan, had abducted the bride. Sultana did not approve of women being molested by his gang, so Pailwan was severely reprimanded

and the girl was sent back, with a suitable present to compensate her for the inconvenience to which she had been put. After the incident of the herdsman's slashed leg Sultana remained in our vicinity for some time. He moved camp frequently and I came upon several old sites while out shooting. It was at this time that I had a very exciting experience.

One evening I shot a fine leopard on a fire-track five miles from home, and as there was not sufficient time to collect carriers to bring it in, I skinned it on the spot and carried the skin home; but on arrival I found that I had left my favourite hunting-knife behind.

Early next morning I set out to retrieve the knife and as I approached the spot where I had left it I saw the glimmer of a fire through a forest glade, some distance from the track. Reports of Sultana's presence in this forest had been coming in for some days, and on the spur of the moment I decided to investigate the fire. Heavy dew on the dead leaves made it possible to move without sound, so taking what cover was available I stalked the fire, which was burning in a little hollow, and found some twenty to twenty-five men sitting round it. Stacked upright against a nearby tree, the fire glinting on their barrels, were a number of guns. Sultana was not present, for, though I had not seen him up to that time, he had been described to me as a young man, small and trim, who invariably dressed in semi-military khaki uniform. This was evidently part of his gang, however, and what was I going to do about it? The old head constable and his equally elderly force of two constables at Kaladhungi would be of little help, and Haldwani, where there was a big concentration of police, was fifteen miles away. While I was considering my next move, I heard one of the men say it was time to be going. Fearing that if I now tried to retreat I should be seen, and trouble might follow, I took a few rapid steps forward and got between the men and their guns. As I did so a ring of surprised faces looked up at me, for I was on slightly higher ground. When I asked them what they were doing here the men looked at each other, and the first to recover from his surprise said, 'Nothing'. In reply to further questions I was told that they were charcoal burners who had come from Bareilly and had lost their way. I then turned and looked towards the tree, and found that what I had taken to be gun barrels were stacked axes, the handles of which, polished by long and hard



use, had reflected the firelight. Telling the men that my feet were wet and cold I joined their circle, and after we had smoked my cigarettes and talked of many things, I directed them to the charcoal-burners' camp they were looking for, recovered my knife, and returned home.

In times of sustained excitement imagination is apt to play queer tricks. Sitting on the ground near a *sambhar* killed by a tiger I have heard the tiger coming and coming, and getting no nearer, and when the tension had become unbearable have turned round with finger on trigger to find a caterpillar biting minute bits out of a crisp leaf near my head. Again, when the light was fading and the time had come for the tiger to return to his kill, out of the corner of my eye I have seen a large animal appear; and as I was gripping my rifle and preparing for a shot an ant had crawled out on a dry twig a few inches from my face. With my thoughts on Sultana the glint of firelight on the polished axe-handles had converted them into gun barrels, and I never looked at them again until the men had convinced me they were charcoal burners. With his efficient organization and better means of transport, Freddy was beginning to exert pressure on Sultana, and to ease the strain the dacoit leader took his gang, by this time considerably reduced by desertion and capture, to Pilibhit on the eastern border of the district. Here he remained for a few months, raiding as far afield as Gorakhpur and building up his store of gold.

On his return to the forests in our vicinity he learned that a very rich dancing-girl from the State of Rampur had recently taken up residence with the headman of Lamachour, a village seven miles from our home. Anticipating a raid, the headman provided himself with a guard of thirty of his tenants. The guard was not armed, and when Sultana arrived, before his men were able to surround the house the dancing-girl slipped through a back door and escaped into the night with all her jewellery. The headman and his tenants were rounded up in the courtyard, and when they denied all knowledge of the girl orders were given to tie them up and beat them to refresh their memories. To this order one of the tenants raised an objection. He said Sultana could do what he liked to him and his fellow tenants, but that he had no right to disgrace the headman by having him tied up and beaten. He was ordered to keep his mouth shut, but as one of the dacoits

advanced towards the headman with a length of rope this intrepid man pulled a length of bamboo out of a lean-to and dashed at the dacoit. He was shot through the chest by one of the gang, but fearing the shot would arouse armed men in neighbouring villages Sultana beat a hasty retreat, taking with him a horse which the headman had recently purchased. I heard of the murder of the brave tenant next morning and sent one of my men to Lamachour to inquire what family the dead man had left, and I sent another man with an open letter to all the headmen of the surrounding villages to ask if they would join in raising a fund for the support of his family. The response to my appeal was as generous as I expected it to be, for the poor are always generous, but the fund was never raised, for the man who had given his life for his master came from Nepal twenty years previously, and neither his friends nor the inquiries I made in Nepal revealed that he had a wife or children. It was after the incident just related that I accepted Freddy's invitation to take a hand in rounding up Sultana, and a month later I joined him at his headquarters at Hardwar. During his eighteen years as Collector of Mirzapur Wyndham had employed ten Koles and ten Bhunyas from the tribes living in the Mirzapur forests to assist him in tiger shooting, and the four best of these men, who were old friends of mine, were now placed by Wyndham at Freddy's disposal and I found them waiting for me at Hardwar. Freddy's plan was for my four friends and myself to track down Sultana, and when we had done this, to lead his force to a convenient place from which to launch his attack. Both these operations, for reasons already given, were to be carried out at night. But Sultana was restless. Perhaps it was just nervousness or he may have had forewarning of Freddy's plans; anyway he never stayed for more than a day in anyone place, and he moved his force long distances at night. The weather was intensely hot and eventually, tired of inaction, the four men and I held a council of war the result of which was that after dinner that night, when Freddy was comfortably seated in a cool part of the veranda where there was no possibility of our being overheard, I put the following proposal before him. He was to let it be known that Wyndham had recalled his men for a tiger shoot, to which I had been invited, and was to have tickets to Haldwani purchased for us and see us off from the Hardwar station by the night train. At the first stop the train made, however, the four men, armed with guns provided by Freddy, and I with my own rifle were to leave the train.

Thereafter we were to have a free hand to bring in Sultana, dead or alive, as opportunity offered.

Freddy sat for a long time with his eyes closed after hearing my proposal — he weighed 20 stone 4 pounds and was apt to doze after dinner— but he was not asleep, for he suddenly sat up and in a very decided voice said, ‘No. I am responsible for your lives, and I won’t sanction this mad ‘scheme’. Arguing with him was of no avail, so the next morning the four men and I left for our respective homes. I was wrong to have made the proposal and Freddy was right in turning it down. The four men and I had no official standing, and had trouble resulted from our attempt to capture Sultana our action could not have been justified. For the rest, neither Sultana’s life nor ours was in any danger, for we had agreed that if Sultana could not be taken alive he would not be taken at all, and we were quite capable of looking after ourselves. Three months later, when the monsoon was in full blast, Freddy asked Herbert of the Forest Department, Fred Anderson, Superintendent of the Terai and Bhabar, and myself, to join him at Hardwar. On arrival we learnt that Freddy had located Sultana’s permanent camp in the heart of the Najibabad jungles, and he wanted us to assist him in surrounding the camp, and to cut off Sultana’s retreat if he slipped out of the ring.

Herbert, a famous polo player, was to be put in command of the fifty mounted men who were to prevent Sultana’s escape, while Anderson and I were to accompany Freddy and help him to form the ring. By this time Freddy had no illusions about the efficiency of Sultana’s intelligence service, and with the exception of Freddy’s two assistants, and the three of us no one knew of the contemplated raid. Each evening the police force, fully armed, were sent out on a long route march, while the four of us went out for an equally long walk, returning after dark to the Dam Bungalow in which we were staying. On the appointed night, instead of marching over the level crossing as they had been wont to do, the route marchers went through the Hardwar goods yard to a siding in which a rake of wagons, with engine and brake-van attached, was standing with doors open on the side away from the station buildings. The last of the doors was being shut as we arrived, and the moment we had climbed into the guard’s van the train,

without any warning whistles, started. Everything that could be done to allay suspicion had been done, even to the cooking of the men's food in their lines and to the laying of our table for dinner. We had started an hour after dark. At 9 p.m. the train drew up between two stations in the heart of the jungle and the order was passed from wagon to wagon for the force to detrain, and as soon as this order had been carried out the train steamed on.

Of Freddy's force of three hundred men, the fifty to be Led by Herbert—who served in France in the First World War with the Indian cavalry— had been sent out the previous night with instructions to make a wide detour to where their mounts were waiting for them, while the main force of two hundred and fifty men with Freddy and Anderson in the lead, and myself bringing up the rear, set off for a destination which was said to be some twenty miles away. Heavy clouds had been banking up all day and when we left the train it was raining in torrents.

Our direction was north for a mile, then east for two miles, again north for a mile, then west for two miles and finally again north. I knew the changes in direction were being made to avoid villages in which there were men in Sultana's pay, and the fact that not a village pye, the best watchdog in the world, barked at us testifies to the skill with which the manoeuvre was carried out. Hour after hour I plodded on, in drenching rain, in the wake of two hundred and fifty heavy men who had left pot holes in the soft ground into which I floundered up to my knees at every second step. For miles we went through elephant grass higher than my head, and balancing on the pitted and slippery ground became more difficult from the necessity of using one hand to shield my eyes from the stiff razor-edged grass. I had often marvelled at Freddy's 20 stone 4 pounds of energy, but never as I did that night. True, he was walking on comparatively firm ground while I was walking in a bog; yet even so he was carrying nine stone more than I, and the line moved on with never a halt.

We had started at 9 p.m. At 2 a.m. I sent a verbal message up the line to ask Freddy if we were going in the right direction. I sent this message because for an hour we had left our original direction northwards, and had been going east. After a long interval word came back that the Captain

Sahib said it was all right. After another two hours, through thick tree and scrub jungle or across patches of high grass, I sent a second message to Freddy asking him to halt the line as I was coming up to speak to him. Silence had been enjoined before starting, and as I made my way to the front I passed a very quiet and weary line of men, some of them sitting on the wet ground and others leaning against trees. I found Freddy and Anderson with their four guides at the head of the column. When Freddy asked if anything was wrong—this I knew referred to stragglers—I said all was well with the men but otherwise everything was wrong, for we were walking in circles. Having lived so much of my life in jungles in which it is very easy to get lost I have acquired a sense of direction which functions as well by night as it does by day. Our change of direction when we first started had been as evident to me as it had been two hours back when we changed direction from north to east. In addition, an hour previously I had noted that we passed under a simul tree with a vulture's nest in it, and when I sent my message to Freddy to halt the line I was again under the same tree. Of the four guides, two were Bhantus of Sultana's gang who had been captured a few days previously in the Hardwar bazaar, and on whose information the present raid had been organized. These two men had lived off and on for two years in Sultana's camp and had been promised their freedom for this night's work. The other two were cattle men who had grazed their cattle in these jungles all their lives, and who daily supplied Sultana with milk. All four men stoutly denied having lost their way, but on being pressed, they hesitated, and finally admitted that they would feel happier about the direction in which they were leading the force if they could see the hills. To see the hills, possibly thirty miles away, on a dark night with thick fog descending down to tree-top level, was impossible, so here was a check which threatened to ruin all Freddy's well-laid plans and, what was even worse, to give Sultana the laugh on us. Our intention had been a surprise attack on the camp, and in order to accomplish this it was necessary to get within striking distance while it was still dark. The guides had informed us that it was not possible to approach the camp in daylight from the side we had chosen without being seen by two guards who were constantly on watch from a *machan* in a high tree which overlooked a wide stretch of grass to the south of the camp. With our guides now freely admitting they had lost their way, only another hour of darkness left and,

worst of all, without knowing how far we were from the camp or in which direction it lay, our chance of a surprise attack was receding with every minute that passed. Then a way out of the dilemma occurred to me. I asked the four men if there was any feature, such as a stream or a well-defined cattle-track, in the direction in which we had originally started, by which they could regain direction, and when they replied that there was an old and well-defined cart-track a mile to the south of the camp, I obtained Freddy's permission to take the lead. I set off at a fast pace in a direction which all who were following me were, I am sure, convinced would lead back to the railway line we had left seven hours earlier. The rain had stopped, a fresh breeze had cleared the sky of clouds, and it was just getting light in the east when I stumbled into a deep cart-rut. Here was the disused track the guides had mentioned, and their joy on seeing it confirmed the opinion I had formed earlier, that losing themselves in the jungle had not been intentional. Taking over the lead again, the men led us along the track for a mile to where a well-used game-track crossed it. Half a mile up the game-track we came to a deep and sluggish stream some thirty feet wide which I was glad to see the track did not cross, for I am terrified of these Terai streams, on the banks and in the depths of which I have seen huge pythons lurking. The track skirted the right bank of the stream, through shoulder-high grass, and after going along it for a few hundred yards the men slowed down. From the way they kept looking to the left I concluded we were getting within sight of the machan, for it was now full daylight with the sun touching the tops of the trees. Presently the leading man crouched down, and when his companions had done the same, he beckoned us to approach.

After signalling to the line to halt and sit down, Freddy, Anderson, and I crept up to the leading guide. Lying beside him and looking through the grass in the direction in which he was pointing we saw a *machan* built in the upper branches of a big tree, between thirty and forty feet above ground. On the machan, with the level sun shining on them, were two men, one sitting with his right shoulder towards us smoking a hookah, and the other lying on his back with his knees drawn up. The tree in which the *machan* was built was growing on the border of the tree and grass jungle and overlooked a wide expanse of open ground. Sultana's camp, the guides said, was three hundred yards inside the tree jungle.

A few feet from where we were lying was a strip of short grass twenty yards wide, running from the stream on our right far out on to the open ground. To retreat a little, cross the stream, and recross it opposite Sultana's camp was the obvious thing to do, but the guides said this would not be possible; not only was the stream too deep to wade, but there was quicksand along the far bank. There remained the doubtful possibility of getting the whole force across the strip of short grass without being seen by the two guards, either of whom might at any moment look in our direction. Freddy had a service revolver, Anderson was unarmed, and I was the only one in the whole force who was carrying a rifle—the police were armed with 12-bore muskets using buckshot, with an effective range of from sixty to eighty yards. I was therefore the only one of the party who could deal with the two guards from our present position. The rifle shots would, of course, be heard in the camp, but the two Bhantus with us were of the opinion that when the guards did not return to the camp to report, men would be sent out to make inquiries. They thought that while this was being done it would be possible for us to encircle the camp. The two men on the *machan* were outlaws, and quite -possibly murderers to boot, and with the rifle in my hands I could have shot the hookah out of the smoker's hands and 'the heel off the other man's shoe without injury to either. But to shoot the men in cold, or in any other temperature of blood, was beyond my powers. So I made the following alternative suggestion: that Freddy give me permission to stalk the men—which would be quite easy, for the tall grass and tree jungle extended right up to the tree in which the *machan* was built and was soaking wet after the all-night rain—and occupy the *machan* with them while Freddy and his men carried on with their job. At first Freddy demurred, for there were two guns on the *machan* within easy reach of the men's hands, but eventually he consented and without further ado I slipped across the open ground and set off, for the Bhantus said the time was approaching for the guards to be changed.

I had covered about a third of the way to the tree when I heard a noise behind and saw Anderson hurrying after me. What Anderson had said to Freddy, or Freddy had said to Anderson I do not know—both were my very good friends. Anyway, Anderson was determined to accompany me. He admitted he could not get through the jungle silently; that there was a good

chance of the men on the *machan* hearing and seeing us; that we might run into the relief guard or find additional guards at the foot of the tree; that being unarmed he would not be able to defend himself, nevertheless and notwithstanding, he was not going to let me go alone. When a man from across the Clyde digs his toes in he is more stubborn than a mule.

In desperation I started to retrace my steps to solicit Freddy's help. But Freddy in the meantime had had time to regret his sanction (I learnt later the Bhantus had informed him the men on the *machan* were very good shots), and when he saw us returning he gave the signal for the line to advance. Fifty or more men had crossed the open strip of ground and we who were in advance were within two hundred yards of the camp when a zealous young constable, catching sight of the machan, fired off his musket. The two men on the *machan* were down the ladder in a flash. They mounted the horses that were tethered at the foot of the tree and raced for the camp. There was now no longer any necessity for silence and in a voice that did not need the aid of a megaphone, Freddy gave the order to charge. In a solid line we swept down on the camp, to find it deserted. The camp was on a little knoll and consisted of three tents and a grass hut used as a kitchen. One of the tents was a store and was stacked with sacks of atta, rice, dal, sugar, tins of ghee, two pyramids of boxes containing some thousands of rounds of 12-bore ammunition, and eleven guns in gun cases. The other two tents were sleeping places and were strewn with blankets and a medley of articles of clothing. Hanging from branches near the kitchen were three flayed goats.

In the confusion following the arrival in camp of the two guards it was possible that some of the partly clothed gang had taken shelter in the high grass surrounding the camp, so orders were given to our men to make a long line, our intention being to beat a wide strip of jungle in the direction in which Herbert and his mounted men were on guard. While the line was being formed I made a cast round the knoll. Having found the tracks of ten or a dozen barefooted men in a *nullah* close to the camp, I suggested to Freddy that we should follow them and see where they led to. The *nullah* was fifteen feet wide and five feet deep, and Freddy, Anderson, and I had proceeded along it for about two hundred yards when we came on an outcrop of gravel, where I lost the tracks. Beyond the gravel the *nullah*



opened out and on the left bank, near where we were standing, was a giant banyan tree with multiple stems. With its forest of stems, and branches sweeping down to the ground, this tree appeared to me to be an ideal place for anyone to hide in, so going to the bank, which at this point was as high as my chin, I attempted to climb up. There was no handhold on the bank and each time I kicked a hole in the soft earth the foothold gave way, and I was just contemplating going forward and getting on to the bank where the *nullah* Rattened out, when a fusillade of shots followed by shouting broke out in the direction of the camp. We dashed back the way we had come and near the camp found a Havildar shot through the chest, and near him a dacoit, with a wisp of cloth round his loins, shot through both legs. The Havildar was sitting on the ground with his back to a tree; his shirt was open, and on the nipple of his left breast there was a spot of blood. Freddy produced a flask and put it to the Havildar's lips, but the man shook his head and put the flask aside, saying, 'It is wine. I cannot drink it'. When pressed he added, 'All my life I have been an abstainer, and I cannot go to my Creator with wine on my lips. I am thirsty and crave a little water'. His brother was standing near by. Someone gave him a hat and he dashed off to the stream that had hampered our movements, and returned in a few minutes with some dirty water which the wounded man drank eagerly. The wound had been made by a pellet of shot and when I could not feel it under the skin I said, 'Keep a strong heart, Havildar Sahib, and the doctor at Najibabad will make you well'. Smiling up at me he replied, 'I will keep a strong heart, Sahib; but no doctor can make me well'.

The dacoit had no inhibitions about 'wine,' and in a few gulps he emptied the contents of the flask of which he was in great need, for he had been shot with a 12-bore musket at very short range.

Two stretchers were improvised from material taken from Sultana's camp, and willing hands—for no distinction was made between the high-caste member of the police force and the low-caste dacoit—took them up. With spare runners running alongside, the stretchers set off through the jungle for the Najibabad hospital twelve miles away. The dacoit died of loss of blood and of shock on the way, and the Havildar died a few minutes after being admitted to the hospital. The beat was abandoned. Herbert did not

come into the picture, for Sultana had been warned of the concentration of horse and none of the dacoits tried to cross the line he was guarding. So the sum total of our carefully planned raid, which had miscarried through no one's fault, was Sultana's entire camp less a few guns, and two dead men. One a poor man, who, chafing at confinement, had sought liberty and adopted the only means of livelihood open to him and who would be mourned by a widow in the Najibabad fort. And the other a man respected by his superiors and loved by his men, whose widow would be cared for, and who had bravely died for a principle—for the 'wine' with which he refused to defile his lips would have sustained him until he had been laid on the operating table.

Three days after the raid Freddy received a letter from the dacoit leader in which Sultana regretted that a shortage of arms and ammunition in the police force had necessitated a raid on his camp, and stating that if in future Freddy would let him know his requirements he, Sultana, would be very glad to supply him.

The supply of arms and ammunition to Sultana was a very sore point with Freddy. Stringent orders on the subject had been issued, but it was not surprising that every licensed dealer and every licensed gun-holder in the area in which Sultana was operating was willing to risk the Government's displeasure when the alternative was the certainty of having his house raided, and the possibility of having his throat cut, if he refused Sultana's demands. So the offer of arms and ammunition was no idle one and it was the most unkind cut the dacoit leader could have delivered to the head of the Special Dacoity Police Force.

With his hide-out gone, harried from end to end of the Terai and Bhabar, and with his gang reduced to forty—all well armed, for the dacoits had soon replaced the arms and ammunition taken from them—Freddy thought the time had now come for Sultana to surrender. So, after obtaining Government sanction—which was given on the understanding that he personally accepted full responsibility—he invited Sultana to a meeting, whenever and wherever convenient. Sultana accepted the invitation, named the time, date, and place, and stipulated that both should attend the meeting

alone and unarmed. On the appointed day, as Freddy stepped out on one side of a wide open glade, in the centre of which a solitary tree was growing, Sultana stepped out on the other side. Their meeting was friendly, as all who have lived in the East would have expected it to be, and when they had seated themselves in the shade of the tree— one a mountain of energy and good humour with the authority of the Government behind him, and the other a dapper little man with a price on his head— Sultana produced a water melon which he smilingly said Freddy could partake of without reservation. The meeting ended in a deadlock, however, for Sultana refused to accept Freddy's terms of unconditional surrender. It was at this meeting that Sultana begged Freddy not to take undue risks. On the day of the raid, he said, he with ten of his men, all fully armed, had taken cover under a banyan tree and had watched Freddy and two other sahibs coming down the *nullah* towards the tree. 'Had the sahib who was trying to climb the bank succeeded in doing so', Sultana added, 'it would have been necessary to shoot the three of you.'

The final round of the heavy-light-weight contest was now to be staged, and Freddy invited Wyndham and I myself to Hardwar to witness and take part in it. Sultana and the remnants of his gang, now weary of movement, had taken up residence at a cattle station in the heart of the Najibabad jungles, and Freddy's plan was to convey his entire force down the Ganges in boats, land at a convenient spot, and surround the cattle station. This raid, like the one already described, was to take place at night. But on this occasion the raid had been timed for the full moon.

On the day chosen, the entire force of three hundred men, with the addition of Freddy's cousin, Wyndham, and myself, embarked as night was falling in ten country boats which had been assembled at a secluded spot on the right bank of the Ganges, a few miles below Hardwar. I was in the leading boat, and all went well until we crossed to the left bank and entered a side channel. The passage down this channel was one of the most terrifying experiences, off dry land, that I have ever had. For a few hundred yards the boat glided over a wide expanse of moonlit water without a ripple on its surface to distort the reflection of the trees on the margin. Gradually the channel narrowed and the speed of the boat increased, and at the same

time we heard the distant sound of rushing water. I have often fished in these side channels of the Ganges, for they are preferred to the main stream by fish, and I marvelled at the courage of the boatmen who were willing to risk their lives and their craft in the rapids we were fast approaching. The boat, like the other nine, was an open cargo freighter eminently suitable for work on the open Ganges, but here in this narrow swift-flowing channel she was just an unmanageable hulk, which threatened to become a wreck every time her bottom planks came in violent contact with submerged boulders. The urgent call of the captain to his crew to fend the boat off the rocky banks and keep her in the middle of the stream, or she would founder, did nothing to allay my fears, for at the time the warning was given the boat was drifting sideways and threatening to break up or capsize every time she struck the bottom. But nightmares cannot last for ever. Though the one that night was long-drawn-out, for we had twenty miles to go, mostly through broken water, it ended when one of the boatmen sprang ashore on the left bank with one end of a long rope and made it fast to a tree. Boat after boat passed us and tied up lower down, until all ten had been accounted for. The force was disembarked on a sandy beach and when cuts and abrasions resulting from contact with the rough timbers of the boats had been attended to, and the boatmen had been instructed to take their craft five miles farther down stream and await orders, we set off in single file to battle our way through half a mile of the heaviest elephant grass I have ever tried to penetrate on foot. The grass was ten to twelve feet high and was weighted down with river fog and dew, and before we had gone a hundred yards we were wet to the skin. When we eventually arrived on the far side we were faced with a wide expanse of water which we took to be an old bed of the Ganges, and scouting parties were sent right and left to find the shortest way round the obstruction. The party that had gone to the right returned first and reported that a quarter of a mile from where we were standing the 'lake' narrowed, and that from this point to the junction of the channel down which we had come there was a swift-flowing river. Soon after the other party returned and reported that there was an unfordable river flowing into the upper end of the lake. It was now quite evident that our boatmen, intentionally or accidentally, had marooned us on an island.

With our boats gone and daylight not far off it was necessary to do something, so we moved down to the lower end of the wide expanse of water to see if we could effect a crossing between it and the junction of the two channels. Where the water narrowed and the toe or draw of the stream started, there appeared to be a possible crossing; above this point the water was twenty feet deep, and below it was a raging torrent. While the rest of us were looking at the fast-flowing water and speculating as to whether anyone would be able to cross it, Wyndham was divesting himself of his clothes. When I remarked that this was an unnecessary proceeding in view of the fact that he was already wet to the skin, he replied that he was not thinking of his clothes, but of his life. When he had taken off every stitch of clothing he tied it into a bundle, using his shirt for the purpose, and placed the bundle firmly on his head, caught the arm of a strapping young constable standing near by and said, 'Come with me'. The young man was so taken aback at being selected to have the honour of drowning with the Commissioner Sahib that he said nothing, and together, with linked arms, the two stepped into the water.

I do not think any of us breathed while we watched that crossing. With the water at times round their waists, and at times up to their armpits, it seemed impossible for them to avoid being carried off their feet and swept into the raging torrent below where no man, no matter how good a swimmer he was, could have lived. Steadily the two brave men, one the oldest in the party and the other possibly the youngest, fought their way on and when at last they struggled out on the far bank a sigh of relief went up from the spectators, which would have been a cheer audible in Hardwar, twenty miles away, had silence not been imposed on us.

Where two men could go three hundred could follow, so a chain was made; and though individual links were at times swept off their feet, the chain held, and the whole force landed safely on the far side. Here we were met by one of Freddy's most trusted informers who, pointing to the rising sun, said we had come too late; that it would not be possible for such a large force to cross the open ground between us and the forest without being seen by the herdsmen in the area, and that therefore the only thing for us to do

was to go back to the island. So back to the island we went, the crossing from this side not being as bad as it had been from the other.

Back in the elephant grass our first concern was to dry our clothes. This was soon accomplished, for the sun was by now hot, and when we were once again dry and warm Freddy, from his capacious haversack, produced a chicken and a loaf of bread which were no less welcome for having been immersed in the cold waters of the Ganges. I have the ability to sleep anywhere and at any time, and, having found a sandy hollow, most of the day had passed when I was awakened by violent sneezing. On joining my companions I found that all three of them were suffering from varying degrees of hay fever. The grass we were in was of the plumed variety and when we had passed through it in the early morning the plumes had been wet. But now, in the hot sun, the plumes had fluffed out and while moving about and trying to find cool places to rest in my companions had shaken the pollen down, with the result that they had given themselves hay fever.

Indians do not get hay fever and I myself have never had it. This was the first time I had ever seen anyone suffering from it, and what I saw alarmed me. Freddy's cousin— a planter on holiday from Bengal— was the worst of the three; his eyes were streaming and swollen to the extent that he could not see, and his nose was running. Freddy could see a little but he could not stop sneezing, and when Freddy sneezed the earth shook. Wyndham, tough old campaigner that he was, while protesting that he was quite all right, was unable to keep his handkerchief away from his nose and eyes. It was bad enough being thrown about in an open boat, marooned on a desert island, and fording raging torrents; but here was the climax. To lead three men who threatened to go blind back to Hardwar at the head of the three hundred policemen was a prospect that made me feel colder than I had felt when crossing the ice-cold waters of the Ganges. As evening closed in the condition of the sufferers improved, much to my relief, and by the time we had crossed the ford for the third time Freddy and Wyndham were all right and the cousin had regained his sight to the extent that it was no longer necessary to tell him when to raise his foot to avoid a stone. Freddy's informer and a guide were waiting for us and led us over the open ground to the mouth of a dry watercourse about a hundred yards wide. The moon had

just risen and visibility was nearly as good as in sunlight when, rounding a bend, we came face to face with an elephant. We had heard there was a rogue elephant in this area, and here he was, tusks flashing in the moonlight, ears spread out, and emitting loud squeals. The guide did nothing to improve the situation by stating that the elephant was very bad tempered, that he had killed many people, and that he was sure to kill a number of us. At first it appeared that the rogue was going to make good the guide's predictions, for with trunk raised high he advanced a few yards. Then he swung round and dashed up the bank, trumpeting defiance as he gained the shelter of the jungle.

Another mile up the watercourse and we came on what the guide said was a fire-track. Here the going was very pleasant, for with short green grass underfoot, and the moonlight glinting on every leaf and blade, it was possible to forget our errand and revel in the beauty of the jungle. As we approached a stretch of burnt grass where an old peacock, perched high on a leafless tree, was sending his warning cry into the night, two leopards stepped out on the track, saw us, and gracefully bounded away and faded out of sight in the shadows. I had been out of my element during the long passage down the side channel, but now, what with the elephant—who was, I knew, only curious and intended us no harm—and then the peacock warning the jungle folk of the presence of danger, and finally the leopards merging into the shadows, I was back on familiar ground, ground that I loved and understood.

Leaving the track, which ran from east to west, the guide led us north for a mile or more through scrub and tree jungle to the bank of a tiny stream overhung by a giant banyan tree. Here we were told to sit down and wait, while the guide went forward to confer with his brother at the cattle station. A long and weary wait it was, which was in no way relieved by pangs of hunger, for we had eaten nothing since our meal off the chicken and loaf of bread, and it was now past midnight; and to make matters worse I, the only one who smoked, had exhausted my supply of cigarettes. The guide returned towards the early hours of the morning and reported that Sultana and the remnants of his gang, now reduced to nine, had left the cattle station the previous evening to raid a village in the direction of Hardwar and that

they were expected back that night, or the following day. Before leaving to try to get us a little food, of which we were in urgent need, the guide and the informer warned us that we were in Sultana's territory and that it would be unwise for any of us to leave the shelter of the banyan tree.

Another weary day passed, the last Wyndham could spend with us, for in addition to being Commissioner of Kumaon he was Political Agent of Tehri State and was due to meet the ruler at Narindra Nagar in two days time. After nightfall a cart loaded with grass arrived, and when the grass had been removed a few sacks of parched gram and forty pounds of gur were revealed. This scanty but welcome ration was distributed among the men. The guide had not forgotten the sahibs, and before driving away he handed Freddy a few chapattis tied up in a piece of cloth that had seen hard times and better days. As we lay on our backs with all topics of conversation exhausted, thinking of hot meals and soft beds in far-off Hardwar, I heard the welcome sounds of a leopard killing a chital a few hundred yards from our tree. Here was an opportunity of getting a square meal, for my portion of chapatti, far from allaying my hunger, had only added to it; so I jumped up and asked Freddy for his kukri. When he asked what on earth I wanted it for, I told him it was to cut off the hind legs of the chital the leopard had just killed. 'What leopard and what chital', he asked, 'are you talking about?' Yes, he could hear the chital calling, but how was he to know that they were not alarmed by some of Sultana's men who were scouting round to spy on us? And anyway, if I was right in thinking a leopard had made a kill, which he doubted, how was I going to take the chital away from it when I could not use a musket (I had not brought my rifle with me on this occasion for I did not know to what use I might be asked to put it) so close to the cattle station? No, he concluded, the whole idea was absurd. So very regretfully I again lay down with my hunger. How could I convince anyone who did not know the jungle folk and their language that I knew the deer had not been alarmed by human beings; that they were watching one of their number being killed by a leopard; and that there was no danger in taking the kill, or as much of it as I wanted, away from the leopard?

The night passed without further incident and at crack of dawn Wyndham and I set out on our long walk to Hardwar. We crossed the Ganges by the



Bhimgoda Dam and after a quick meal at the Dam Bungalow had an evening's fishing on the wide expanse of water above the dam that will long be remembered.

Next morning, just as Wyndham was leaving to keep his appointment at Narindra Nagar, and I was collecting some eatables to take back to my hungry companions, word was brought to us by runner that Freddy had captured Sultana. Sultana had returned to the cattle station the previous evening. After his men had surrounded the station, Freddy crept up to the large hut used by the cattle men, and, seeing a sheeted figure asleep on the only charpoy the hut contained, sat down on it. Pinned down by 20 stone 4 pounds Sultana was not unable to offer any resistance, nor was he able to carry out his resolve of not being taken alive. Of the six dacoits in the hut at the time of the raid, four, including Sultana, were captured and the other two, Babu and Pailwan, Sultana's lieutenants, broke through the police cordon and escaped, after being fired at. I do not know how many murders Sultana was responsible for, but when brought to trial the main charge against him was the murder, by one of his gang, of the tenant of the headman of Lamachour. While in the condemned cell Sultana sent for Freddy and bequeathed to him his wife and son in the Najibabad Fort, and his dog, of whom he was very fond. Freddy adopted the dog, and those who know Freddy will not need to be told that he faithfully carried out his promise to care for Sultana's family.

Some months later Freddy, now promoted and the youngest man in the Indian Police service ever to be honoured by His Majesty the King with a C.I.E., was attending the annual Police Week at Moradabad. One of the functions at this week was a dinner to which all the police officers in the province were invited. During the dinner one of the waiters whispered to Freddy that his orderly wanted to speak to him. This orderly had been with Freddy during the years Freddy had been in pursuit of Sultana. Now, having an evening off, he had strolled down to the Moradabad railway station. While he was there, a train came in, and as he idly watched the passengers alighting two men came out of a compartment near him. One of these men spoke to the other, who hastily put a handkerchief up to his face, but not before the orderly had seen that he had a piece of cotton wool sticking to his

nose. The orderly kept his eye on the men, who had a considerable amount of luggage, and when they had made themselves comfortable in a corner of the waiting room he commandeered an ekka and hastened to inform Freddy. When Sultana's two lieutenants, Babu and Pailwan, broke through the cordon surrounding the cattle station, they had been fired at, and shortly thereafter a man had visited a small dispensary near Najibabad to have an injury to his nose, which he said had been caused by a dog bite, attended to. When reporting the case to the police, the compounder who dressed the wound said he suspected it had been caused by a pellet of buckshot. So the entire police force of the province were on the lookout for a man with an injured nose, all the more so because Babu and Pailwan were credited with having committed most of the murders for which Sultana's gang were responsible. When he heard the orderly's story Freddy jumped into his car and dashed to the station—dashed is the right word, for when Freddy is in a hurry the road is before him and traffic and corners do not exist. At the station he placed guards at all the exits to the waiting room and then went up to the two men and asked them who they were. Merchants, they answered, on their way from Bareilly to the Punjab. Why then, asked Freddy, had they taken a train that terminated at Moradabad? He was told that there had been two trains at the Bareilly platform and they had been directed to the wrong one. When Freddy learnt the men had not had any food, and that they would have to wait until next morning for a connecting train, he invited them to accompany him and be his guests. For a moment the men hesitated, and then said, 'As you wish, Sahib'.

With the two men in the back of the car Freddy drove slowly, closely questioning them, and to all his questions he received prompt answers. The men then asked Freddy if it was customary for sahibs to visit railway stations at night and carry off passengers, leaving their luggage to be plundered by any who cared to do so. Freddy knew that his action, without a duly executed warrant, could be described as high-handed and might land him in serious trouble if the members of Sultana's gang serving sentences in the Moradabad jail failed to identify their late companions. While these unpleasant thoughts were chasing each other through his mind, the car arrived at the bungalow in which he was putting up for the Police Week. All dogs love Freddy, and Sultana's dog was no exception. In the months that

had passed this pye with a dash of terrier blood had given Freddy all his affection, and now, when the car stopped and the three men got out, the dog came dashing out of the bungalow, stopped in surprise, and then hurled himself at the two travellers with every manifestation of delight that a dog can exhibit. For a tense minute Freddy and the two men looked at each other in silence and then Pailwan, who knew the fate that awaited him, stooped down and patting the dog's head said, 'In face of this honest witness what use is it, Young Sahib, for us to deny we are the men you think we are'. Society demands protection against criminals, and Sultana was a criminal. He was tried under the law of the land, found guilty, and executed. Nevertheless, I cannot withhold a great measure of admiration for the little man who set at nought the might of the Government for three long years, and who by his brave demeanour won the respect of those who guarded him in the condemned cell.

I could have wished that justice had not demanded that Sultana be exhibited in manacles and leg-irons, and exposed to ridicule from those who trembled at the mere mention of his name while he was at liberty. I could also have wished that he had been given a more lenient sentence, for no other reasons than that he had been branded a criminal at birth, and had not had a fair chance; that when power was in his hands he had not oppressed the poor; that when I tracked him to the banyan tree he spared my life and the lives of my friends. And finally, that he went to his meeting with Freddy, not armed with a knife or a revolver, but with a water melon in his hands.



## *Loyalty*

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THE mail train was running at its maximum speed of thirty miles per hour through country that was familiar. For mile upon mile the newly risen sun had been shining on fields where people were reaping the golden wheat, for it was the month of April and the train was passing through the Gangetic valley, the most fertile land in India.

During the previous year India had witnessed one of her worst famines. I had seen whole villages existing on the bark of trees; on minute grass seeds swept up with infinite labour from scorching plains; and on the wild plums that grow on waste lands too poor for the raising of crops. Mercifully the weather had changed, good winter rains had brought back fertility to the land, and the people who had starved for a year were now eagerly reaping a good harvest. Early though the hour was, the scene was one of intense activity in which every individual of the community had his, or her, allotted part. The reaping was being done by women, most of them landless labourers who move from area to area, as the crop ripens, and who for their labour— which starts at dawn and ends when there is no longer light to work by— receive one-twelfth to one-sixteenth of the crop they cut in the course of the day.

There were no hedges to obstruct the view, and from the carriage window no mechanical device of any kind was to be seen. The ploughing had been done by oxen, two to a plough; the reaping was being done by sickles with a curved blade eighteen inches long; the sheaves, tied with twisted stalks of wheat straw, were being carted to the threshing floor on oxcarts with wooden wheels; and on the threshing floor, plastered over with cow dung, oxen were treading out the corn; they were tied to a long rope, one end of which was made fast to a pole firmly fixed in the ground. As a field was cleared of the sheaves children drove cattle on to it to graze on the stubble and amongst the cattle old and infirm women were sweeping the ground to recover any seed that had fallen from the ears when the wheat was being cut. Half of what these toilers collected would be taken by the owner of the

field and the other half— which might amount to as much as a pound or two, if the ground was not too sun cracked— they would be permitted to retain.

My journey was to last for thirty-six hours. I had the carriage to myself, and the train would stop for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Every mile of the country through which the train was running was interesting; and yet I was not happy, for in the steel trunk under my seat was a string bag containing two hundred rupees which did not belong to me. Eighteen months previously I had taken employment as a Fuel Inspector with the railway on which I was now travelling. I had gone straight from school to this job, and for those eighteen months I had lived in the forest cutting five hundred thousand cubic feet of timber, to be used as fuel in locomotives. After the trees had been felled and billeted, each billet not more and not less than thirty-six inches long, the fuel was carted ten miles to the nearest point of the railway, where it was stacked and measured and then loaded into fuel trains and taken to the stations where it was needed. Those eighteen months alone in the forest had been strenuous, but I had kept fit and enjoyed the work. There was plenty of game in the forest in the way of chital, four-horned antelope, pig, and pea fowl, and in the river that formed one boundary of the forest there were several varieties of fish and many alligators and python. My work did not permit of my indulging in sport during daylight hours so I had to do all my shooting for the pot, and fishing, at night. Shooting by moonlight is very different from shooting in daylight, for though it is easier to stalk a deer or a rooting pig at night it is difficult to shoot accurately unless the moon can be got to shine on the foresight. The pea fowl had to be shot while they were roosting, and I am not ashamed to say that I occasionally indulged in this form of murder, for the only meat I ate during that year and a half was what I shot on moonlight nights; during the dark period of the moon I had perforce to be a vegetarian.

The felling of the forest disarranged the normal life of the jungle folk and left me with the care of many waifs and orphans, all of whom had to share my small tent with me. It was when I was a bit crowded with two broods of partridges— one black and the other grey, four pea fowl chicks, two leverets, and two baby four-horned antelope that could only just stand

upright on their spindle legs, that Rex the python took up his quarters in the tent. I returned an hour after nightfall that day, and while I was feeding the four-footed inmates with milk I saw the lantern light glinting on something in a corner of the tent and on investigation found Rex coiled up on the straw used as a bed by the baby antelope. A hurried count revealed that none of the young inmates of the tent were missing, so I left Rex in the corner he had selected. For two months thereafter Rex left the tent each day to bask in the sun, returning to his corner at sundown, and during the whole of that period he never harmed any of the young life he shared the tent with. Of all the waifs and orphans who were brought up in the tent, and who were returned to the forest as soon as they were able to fend for themselves, Tiddley-de-winks, a four-horned antelope, was the only one who refused to leave me. She followed me when I moved camp to be nearer to the railway line to supervise the loading of the fuel, and in doing so nearly lost her life. Having been brought up by hand she had no fear of human beings and the day after our move she approached a man who, thinking she was a wild animal, tried to kill her. When I returned to the tent that evening I found her lying near my camp bed and on picking her up saw that both her forelegs had been broken, and that the broken ends of the bones had worked through the skin. While I was getting a little milk down her throat, and trying to summon sufficient courage to do what I knew should be done, my servant came into the tent with a man who admitted to having tried to kill the poor beast. It appeared that this man had been working in his field when Tiddley-de-winks went up to him, and thinking she had strayed in from the nearby forest, he struck her with a stick and then chased her; and it was only when she entered my tent that he realized she was a tame animal. My servant had advised him to leave before I returned, but this the man had refused to do. When he had told his story he said he would return early next morning with a bone-setter from his village. There was nothing I could do for the injured animal, beyond making a soft bed for her and giving her milk at short intervals, and at day break next morning the man returned with the bone-setter. It is unwise in India to judge from appearances. The bone-setter was a feeble old man, exhibiting in his person and tattered dress every sign of poverty, but he was none the less a specialist, and a man of few words. He asked me to lift up the injured animal, stood looking at her for a few minutes, and then turned and left the tent, saying over his shoulder that he

would be back in two hours. I had worked week in week out for months on end so I considered I was justified in taking a morning off, and before the old man returned I had cut a number of stakes in the nearby jungle and constructed a small pen in a corner of the tent. The man brought back with him a number of dry jute stalks from which the bark had been removed, a quantity of green paste, several

young castor-oil plant leaves as big as plates, and a roll of thin jute twine. When I had seated myself on the edge of the camp bed with Tiddley-de-winks across my knees, her weight partly supported by her hind legs and partly by my knees, the old man sat down on the ground in front of her with his materials within reach.

The bones of both forelegs had been splintered midway between the knees and the tiny hooves, and the dangling portion of the legs had twisted round and round. Very gently the old man untwisted the legs, covered them from knee to hoof with a thick layer of green paste, laid strips of the castor-oil leaves over the paste to keep it in position, and over the leaves laid the jute stalks, binding them to the legs with jute twine. Next morning he returned with splints made of jute stalks strung together, and when they had been fitted to her legs Tiddley-de-winks was able to bend her knees and place her hooves, which extended an inch beyond the splints, on the ground.

The bone-setter's fee was one rupee, plus two annas for the ingredients he had put in the paste and the twine he had purchased in the bazaar and not until the splints had been removed and the little antelope was able to skip about again would he accept either his fee or the little present I gratefully offered him.

My work, every day of which I had enjoyed, was over now and I was on my way to headquarters to render an account of the money I had spent and, I feared, to look for another job; for the locomotives had been converted to coal-burning and no more wood fuel would be needed. My books were all in perfect order and I had the feeling that I had rendered good service, for I had done in eighteen months what had been estimated to take two years. Yet

I was uneasy, and the reason for my being so was the bag of money in my steel trunk.

I reached my destination, Samastipur, at 9 a.m. and after depositing my luggage in the waiting-room set out for the office of the head of the department I had been working for, with my account books and the bag containing the two hundred rupees. At the office I was told by a very imposing doorkeeper that the master was engaged, and that I would have to wait. It was hot in the open veranda, and as the minutes dragged by my nervousness increased, for an old railway hand who had helped me to make up my book had warned me that to submit balanced accounts and then admit, as I had every intention of doing, that I had two hundred rupees in excess would land me in very great trouble. Eventually the door opened and a very harassed-looking man emerged; and before the doorkeeper could close it, a voice from inside the room bellowed at me to come in.

Ryles, the head of the Locomotive Department of the Bengal and North Western Railway, was a man weighing sixteen stone, with a voice that struck terror into all who served under him, and with a heart of gold. Bidding me sit down he drew my books towards him, summoned a clerk and very carefully checked my figures with those received from the stations to which the fuel had been sent. Then he told me he regretted my services would no longer be needed, said that discharge orders would be sent to me later in the day, and indicated that the interview was over. Having picked my hat off the floor I started to leave, but was called back and told I had forgotten to remove what appeared to be a bag of money that I had placed on the table. It was foolish of me to have thought I could just leave the two hundred rupees and walk away, but that was what I was trying to do when Ryles called me; so I went back to the table and told him that the money belonged to the Railway, and as I did not know how to account for it in my books, I had brought it to him. 'Your books are balanced', Ryles said, 'and if you have not faked your accounts I should like an explanation.'

Tewari, the head clerk, had come into the room with a tray of papers and he stood behind Ryles's chair, with encouragement in his kindly old eyes, as I gave Ryles the following explanation. When my work was nearing



completion, fifteen cart-men, who had been engaged to cart fuel from the forest to the railway line, came to me one night and stated they had received an urgent summons to return to their village, to harvest the crops. The fuel they had carted was scattered over a wide area, and as it would take several days to stack and measure it they wanted me to make a rough calculation of the amount due to them, as it was essential for them to start on their journey that night. It was a dark night and quite impossible for me to calculate the cubic contents of the fuel, so I told them I would accept their figures. Two hours later they returned, and within a few minutes of paying them, I heard their carts creaking away into the night. They left no address with me, and several weeks later, when the fuel was stacked and measured, I found they had underestimated the amount due to them by two hundred rupees. When I had told my story Ryles informed me that the Agent, Izat, was expected in Samastipur next day, and that he would leave him to deal with me. Izat, Agent of three of the most flourishing railways in India, arrived next morning and at midday I received a summons to attend Ryles's office. Izat, a small dapper man with piercing eyes, was alone in the office when I entered it, and after complimenting me on having finished my job six months ahead of time he said Ryles had shown him my books and given him a report and that he wanted to ask one question. Why had I not pocketed the two hundred rupees, and said nothing about it? My answer to this question was evidently satisfactory, for that evening, while waiting at the station in a state of uncertainty, I received two letters, one from Tewari thanking me for my contribution of two hundred rupees to the Railway men's Widows' and Orphans' Fund, of which he was Honorary Secretary, and the other from Izat informing me that my services were being retained, and instructing me to report to Ryles for duty.

For a year there after I worked up and down the railway on a variety of jobs, at times on the footplates of locomotives reporting on consumption of coal— a job I liked for I was permitted to drive the engines; at times as guard of goods trains, a tedious job, for the railway was short-handed and on many occasions I was on duty for forty-eight hours at a stretch; and at times as assistant storekeeper, or assistant station-master. And then one day I received orders to go to Mokameh Ghat and see Storrar, the Ferry Superintendent. The Bengal and North Western Railway runs through the

Gangetic valley at varying distances from the Ganges river, and at several places branch line stake off from the main line and run down to the river and, by means of ferries, connect up with the broad gauge railways on the right bank. Mokameh Ghat on the right bank of the Ganges is the most important of these connexions.

I left Samastipur in the early hours of the morning and at the branch-line terminus, Samaria Ghat, boarded the S.S. Gorakhpur. Storrar had been apprised of my visit but no reason had been given, and as I had not been told why I was to go to Mokameh Ghat, we spent the day partly in his house and partly in walking about the extensive sheds, in which there appeared to be a considerable congestion of goods. Two days later I was summoned to Gorakhpur, the headquarters of the railway, and informed that I had been posted to Mokameh Ghat as Trans-shipment Inspector, that my pay had been increased from one hundred to one hundred and fifty rupees per month, and that I was to take over the contract for handling goods a week later.

So back to Mokameh Ghat I went, arriving on this occasion at night, to take up a job about which I knew nothing, and to take on a contract without knowing where to get a single labourer, and, most important of all, with a capital of only one hundred and fifty rupees, saved during my two and a half years' service.

Storrar was not expecting me on this occasion, but he gave me dinner, and when I told him why I had returned we took our chairs on to the veranda, where a cool wind was blowing off the river, and talked late into the night. Storrar was twice my age and had been at Mokameh Ghat for several years. He was employed as Ferry Superintendent by the Bengal and North Western (metre-gauge) Railway, and was in charge of a fleet of steamers and barges that ferried passengers and metre-gauge wagons between Samaria Ghat and Mokameh Ghat. I learnt from him that eighty per cent, of the longdistance traffic on the Bengal and North Western Railway passed through Mokameh Ghat; and that each year, from March to September, congestion of goods traffic took place at Mokameh Ghat and caused serious loss to the Railway.

The transfer of goods between the two railways at Mokameh Ghat, necessitated by a break of gauge, was done by a Labour Company which held the contract for handling goods throughout the length of the broad-gauge railway. In Storrar's opinion the indifference of this company to the interests of the metre- gauge railway, and the seasonal shortage of labour due to the harvesting of crops in the Gangetic valley, were the causes of the annual congestion. Having imparted this information, he very pertinently asked how I, a total stranger to the locality and without any capital— he brushed aside my hard-earned savings— proposed to accomplish what the Labour Company with all their resources had failed to do. The sheds at Mokameh Ghat, he added, were stacked to the roof with goods; there were four hundred wagons in the yard waiting to be unloaded, and a thousand wagons on the far side of the river waiting to be ferried across. 'My advice to you', he concluded, 'is to catch the early steamer to Samaria Ghat and to go straight back to Gorakhpur. Tell the Railway you will have nothing to do with the handling contract.' I was up early next morning but I did not catch the steamer to Samaria Ghat. Instead, I went on a tour of inspection of the sheds and of the goods yard. Storrar had not over painted the picture: in fact the conditions were even worse than he had said they were, for in addition to the four hundred metre-gauge wagons there were the same number of broad-gauge wagons waiting to be unloaded. At a rough calculation I put the goods at Mokameh Ghat waiting to be dealt with at fifteen thousand tons, and I had been sent to clear up the mess. Well, I was not quite twenty-one years of age, and summer was starting, a season when all of us are a little bit mad. By the time I met Ram Saran I had made up my mind that I would take on the job, no matter what the result might be. Ram Saran was station-master at Mokameh Ghat, a post he had held for two years. He was twenty years older than I was, had an enormous jet black beard, and was the father of five children. He had been advised by telegram of my arrival, but had not been told that I was to take over the handling contract.

When I gave him this bit of news his face beamed all over and he said, 'Good, Sir. Very good. We will manage.' My heart warmed towards Ram Saran on hearing that 'we', and up to his death, thirty-five years later, it never cooled. When I told Storrar over breakfast that morning that I had decided to take on the handling contract he remarked that fools never took

good advice, but added that he would do all he could to help me, a promise he faithfully kept. In the months that followed he kept his ferry running day and night to keep me supplied with wagons.

The journey from Gorakhpur had taken two days, so when I arrived at Mokameh Ghat I had five days in which to learn what my duties were, and to make arrangements for taking over the handling contract. The first two days I spent in getting acquainted with my staff which, in addition to Ram Saran, consisted of an assistant station-master, a grand old man by the name of Chatterji who was old enough to be my grandfather, sixty-five clerks, and a hundred shunters, pointsmen, and watchmen. My duties extended across the river to Samaria Ghat where I had a clerical and menial staff a hundred strong. The supervising of these two staffs, and the care of the goods in transit, was in itself a terrifying job and added to it was the responsibility of providing a labour force sufficient to keep the five hundred thousand tons of goods that passed through Mokameh Ghat annually flowing smoothly.

The men employed by the big Labour Company were on piece work, and as all work at Mokameh Ghat was practically at a stand still, there were several hundred very discontented men sitting about the sheds, many of whom offered me their services when they heard that I was going to do the handling for the metre-gauge railway. I was under no agreement not to employ the Labour Company's men, but thought it prudent not to do so. However, I saw no reason why I should not employ their relatives, so on the first of the three days I had in hand I selected twelve men and appointed them headmen. Eleven of these headmen undertook to provide ten men each, to start with, for the handling of goods, and the twelfth undertook to provide a mixed gang of sixty men and women for the handling of coal. The traffic to be dealt with consisted of a variety of commodities, and this meant employing different castes to deal with the different classes of goods. So of the twelve headmen, eight were Hindus, two Mohammedans, and two men of the depressed class; and as only one of the twelve was literate I employed one Hindu and one Mohammedan clerk to keep their accounts. While one Labour Company was doing the work of both railways the interchange of goods had taken place from wagon to wagon. Now each

railway was to unload its goods in the sheds, and reload from shed to wagon. For all classes of goods, excluding heavy machinery and coal, I was to be paid at the rate of Re 1-7-0 (equivalent to is. 11d. at the rate of exchange then current) for every thousand maunds of goods unloaded from wagons to shed or loaded from shed to wagons. Heavy machinery and coal were one-way traffic and as these two commodities were to be trans-shipped from wagon to wagon and only one contractor could be employed for the purpose, the work was entrusted to me, and I was to receive Re 1-4-0 (is. 8d.) for unloading, and the same for loading, one thousand maunds. There are eighty pounds in a maund, and a thousand maunds therefore are equal to over thirty-five tons. These rates will appear incredible, but their accuracy can be verified by a reference to the records of the two railways.

A call-over on the last evening revealed that I had eleven headmen, each with a gang of ten men, and one headman with a mixed gang of sixty men and women. This, together with the two clerks, completed my force. At daybreak next morning I telegraphed to Gorakhpur that I had assumed my duties as Trans-shipment Inspector, and had taken over the handling contract.

Ram Saran's opposite number on the broad-gauge railway was an Irishman by the name of Tom Kelly. Kelly had been at Mokameh Ghat for some years and though he was very pessimistic of my success, he very sportingly offered to help me in every way he could. With the sheds congested with goods, and with four hundred wagons of each railway waiting to be unloaded, it was necessary to do something drastic to make room in the sheds and get the traffic moving, so I arranged with Kelly that I would take the risk of unloading a thousand tons of wheat on the ground outside the sheds and with the wagons so released clear a space in the sheds for Kelly to unload a thousand tons of salt and sugar. Kelly then with his empty wagons would clear a space in the sheds for me. This plan worked admirably. Fortunately for me it did not rain while my thousand tons of wheat were exposed to the weather, and in ten days we had not only cleared the accumulation in the sheds but also the accumulation of wagons. Kelly and I were then able to advise our respective headquarters to resume the booking of goods via Mokameh Ghat, which had been suspended for a

fortnight. I took over the contract at the beginning of the summer, the season when traffic on Indian railways is at its heaviest, and as soon as booking was opened a steady stream of downwards traffic from the Bengal and North Western Railway and an equally heavy stream from the broad-gauge railway started pouring into Mokameh Ghat. The rates on which I had been given the contract were the lowest paid to any contractor in India, and the only way in which I could hope to keep my labour was by cutting it down to the absolute minimum and making it work harder in order that it would earn as much, or possibly a little more, than other labour on similar work. All the labour at Mokameh Ghat was on piece work, and at the end of the first week my men and I were overjoyed to find that they had earned, on paper, fifty per cent, more than the Labour Company's men had earned. When entrusting me with the contract the Railway promised to pay me weekly, and I on my part promised to pay my labour weekly. The Railway, however, when making their promise, failed to realize that by switching over from one handling contractor to another they would be raising complications for their Audit Department that would take time to resolve. For the Railway this was a small matter, but for me it was very different. My total capital on arrival at Mokameh Ghat had been one hundred and fifty rupees, and there was no one in all the world I could call on to help me with a loan, so until the Railway paid me I could not pay my men.

I have entitled this story Loyalty and I do not think that anyone has ever received greater loyalty than I did, not only from my labour, but also from the railway staff, during those first three months that I was at Mokameh Ghat. Nor do I think that men have ever worked harder. The work started every morning, weekdays and Sundays alike, at 4 a.m., and continued without interruption up to 8 p.m. The clerks whose duty it was to check and tally the goods took their meals at different hours to avoid a stoppage of work and my men ate their food, which was brought to them by wives, mothers, or daughters, in the sheds. There were no trade unions or slaves and slave-drivers in those days and every individual was at liberty to work as many, or as few, hours as he or she wished to. And everyone worked cheerfully and happily; for no matter whether it was the procuring of more and better food and clothing for the family, the buying of a new ox to replace a worn-out one, or the paying-off of a debt, the incentive, without

which no man can work his best, was there. My work and Ram Saran's did not end when the men knocked off work, for there was correspondence to attend to, and the next day's work to be planned and arranged for, and during those first three months neither of us spent more than four hours in bed each night. I was not twenty-one and as hard as nails, but Ram Saran was twenty years older and soft, and at the end of the three months he had lost a stone in weight but none of his cheerfulness.

Lack of money was now a constant worry to me, and as week succeeded week the worry became a hideous nightmare that never left me. First the headmen and then the labourers pledged their cheap and pitiful bits of jewellery and now all credit had gone; and to make matters worse, the men of the Labour Company, who were jealous that my men had earned more than they did, were beginning to taunt my men. On several occasions ugly incidents were narrowly avoided, for semi-starvation had not impaired the loyalty of my men and they were willing to give battle to anyone who as much as hinted that I had tricked them into working for me, and that they would never see a pice of the money they had earned. The monsoon was late in coming that year and the red ball in the sky, fanned by a wind from an unseen furnace, was making life a burden. At the end of a long and a very trying day I received a telegram from Samaria Ghat informing me that an engine had been derailed on the slipway that fed the barges on which wagons were ferried across to Mokameh Ghat. A launch conveyed me across the river and twice within the next three hours the engine was replaced on the track, with the aid of hand jacks, only to be derailed again. It was not until the wind had died down and the powdery sand could be packed under the wooden sleepers that the engine was re-railed for the third time, and the slipway again brought into use. Tired and worn out, and with eyes swollen and sore from the wind and sand, I had just sat down to my first meal that day when my twelve headmen filed into the room, and seeing my servant placing a plate in front of me, with the innate courtesy of Indians, filed out again. I then, as I ate my dinner, heard the following conversation taking place in the veranda.

One of the headmen: What was on the plate you put in front of the sahib?

My servant: A *chapati* and a little dal.

One of the headmen: Why only one *chapati* and a little dal?

My servant: Because there is no money to buy more.

One of the headmen: What else does the sahib eat?

My servant: Nothing.

After a short silence I heard the oldest of the headmen, a Mohammedan with a great beard dyed with henna, say to his companions, 'Go home. I will stay and speak to the sahib.' When my servant had removed the empty plate the old headman requested permission to enter the room, and standing before me spoke as follows: 'We came to tell you that our stomachs have long been empty and that after tomorrow it would be no longer possible for us to work. But we have seen tonight that your case is as bad as ours and we will carry on as long as we have strength to stand. I will, with your permission, go now, sahib, and, for the sake of Allah, I beg you will do something to help us.'

Every day for weeks I had been appealing to headquarters at Gorakhpur for funds and the only reply I could elicit was that steps were being taken to make early payment of my bills. After the bearded headman left me that night I walked across to the Telegraph Office, where the telegraphist on duty was sending the report I submitted each night of the work done during the day, took a form off his table and told him to clear the line for an urgent message to Gorakhpur. It was then a few minutes after midnight and the message I sent read: 'Work at Mokameh Ghat ceases at midday today unless I am assured that twelve thousand rupees has been dispatched by morning train.' The telegraphist read the message over and looking up at me said: 'If I have your permission I will tell my brother, who is on duty at this hour, to deliver the message at once and not wait until office hours in the morning.' Ten hours later, and with two hours of my ultimatum still to run, I saw a telegraph messenger hurrying towards me with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand. Each group of men he passed stopped work to stare



after him, for everyone in Mokameh Ghat knew the purport of the telegram I had sent at midnight.

After I had read the telegram the messenger, who was the son of my office peon, asked if the news was good; and when I told him it was good, he dashed off and his passage down the sheds was punctuated by shouts of delight. The money could not arrive until the following morning, but what did a few hours matter to those who had waited for long months?

The pay clerk who presented himself at my office next day, accompanied by some of my men carrying a cash chest slung on a bamboo pole and guarded by two policemen, was a jovial Hindu who was as broad as he was long and who exuded good humour and sweat in equal proportions. I never saw him without a pair of spectacles tied across his forehead with red tape. Having settled himself on the floor of my office he drew on a cord tied round his neck and from somewhere deep down in his person pulled up a key. He opened the cash chest, and lifted out twelve string-bags each containing one thousand freshly minted silver rupees. He licked a stamp, and stuck it to the receipt I had signed. Then, delving into a pocket that would comfortably have housed two rabbits, he produced an envelope containing bank notes to the value of four hundred and fifty rupees, my arrears of pay for three months.

I do not think anyone has ever had as great pleasure in paying out money as I had when I placed a bag containing a thousand rupees into the hands of each of the twelve headmen, nor do I think men have ever received money with greater pleasure than they did. The advent of the fat pay clerk had relieved a tension that had become almost unbearable, and the occasion called for some form of celebration, so the remainder of the day was declared a holiday—the first my men and I had indulged in for ninety-five days. I do not know how the others spent their hours of relaxation. For myself, I am not ashamed to admit that I spent mine in sound and restful sleep.

For twenty-one years my men and I worked the handling contract at Mokameh Ghat, and during the whole of that long period, and even when I

was absent in France and in Waziristan during the 1914-18 war, the traffic flowed smoothly through the main outlet of the Bengal and North Western Railway with never a hitch. When we took over the contract, between four and five hundred thousand tons of goods were passing through Mokameh Ghat, and when I handed over to Ram Saran the traffic had increased to a million tons.



## *Budhu*

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**B**UDHU was a man of the Depressed Class, and during all the years I knew him I never saw him smile: his life had been too hard and the iron had entered deep into his very soul. He was about thirty-five years of age, a tall gaunt man, with a wife and two young children, when he applied to me for work. At his request I put him on to trans-shipping coal from broad-gauge trucks to metre-gauge wagons at Mokameh Ghat, for in this task men and women could work together, and Budhu wanted his wife to work with him. The broad-gauge trucks and metre-gauge wagons stood opposite each other with a four-foot-wide sloping platform between, and the coal had to be partly shovelled and partly carried in baskets from the trucks into the wagons. The work was cruelly hard, for there was no covering to the platform. In winter the men and women worked in bitter cold, often wet with rain for days on end, and in summer the brick platform and the iron floors of the trucks and wagons blistered their bare feet. A shovel in the hands of a novice, working for his bread and the bread of his children, is a cruel tool. The first day's work leaves the hands red and sore and the back with an ache that is a torment. On the second day blisters form on the hands, and the ache in the back becomes an even greater torment. On the third day the blisters break and become septic, and the back can with difficulty be straightened. Thereafter for a week or ten days only guts, and plenty of them, can keep the sufferer at work— as I know from experience.

Budhu and his wife went through all these phases, and often, when they had done sixteen hours' piece work and were dragging themselves to the quarters I had provided for them, I was tempted to tell them they had suffered enough and should look for other less strenuous work. But they were making good wages, better (Budhu said) than they had ever made before, so I let them carry on, and the day came when with hardened hands and backs that no longer ached they left their work with as brisk and as light a step as they had approached it.

I had some two hundred men and women trans-shipping coal at that time, for the coal traffic was as heavy as it always was in the summer. India was an exporting country in those days, and the wagons that took the grain, opium, indigo, hides, and bones to Calcutta returned from the collieries in Bengal loaded with coal, five hundred thousand tons of which passed through Mokameh Ghat.

One day Budhu and his wife were absent from work. Dhamari, the headman of the coal gang, informed me that Budhu had received a postcard the previous day and had left that morning with his family, saying he would return to work as soon as it was possible for him to do so. Two months later the family returned and reoccupied their quarters, and Budhu and his wife worked as industriously as they had always done. At about the same time the following year Budhu, whose frame had now filled out, and his wife, who had lost her haggard look, again absented themselves from work. On this occasion they were absent three months, and looked tired and worn out on their return. Except when consulted, or when information was voluntarily given, I never inquired into the private affairs of my work people, for Indians are sensitive on this point; so I did not know why Budhu periodically left his work which he invariably did after receiving a postcard. The post for the work people was delivered to the headmen and distributed by them to the men and women working under them, so I instructed Chamari to send Budhu to me the next time he received a card. Nine months later, when the coal traffic was unusually heavy and every man and woman in my employ was working to full capacity, Budhu, carrying a post card in his hand, presented himself at my office. The postcard was in a script that I could not read so I asked Budhu to read it to me. This he could not do, for he had not been taught to read and write, but he said Chamari had read it to him and that it was an order from his master to come at once as the crops were ready to harvest. The following was Budhu's story as he told it to me that day in my office, and his story is the story of millions of poor people in India.

'My grandfather, who was a field labourer, borrowed two rupees from the *bania* of the village in which he lived. The *bania* retained one of the rupees as advance interest for one year, and made my grandfather put his thumb-

mark to an entry in his *bhai khata* (register of accounts). When my grandfather was able to do so from time to time, he paid the *bania* a few annas by way of interest. On the death of my grandfather my father took over the debt, which then amounted to fifty rupees. During my father's lifetime the debt increased to one hundred and fifteen rupees. In the meantime the old *bania* died and his son, who reigned in his place, sent for me when my father died and informed me that as the family debt now amounted to a considerable sum it would be necessary for me to give him a stamped and duly executed document. This I did, and as I had no money to pay for the stamped paper and for the registration of the document the *bania* advanced the required amount and added it to the debt, which together with interest now amounted to one hundred and thirty rupees. As a special favour the *bania* consented to reduce the interest to twenty-five per cent. This favour he granted me on condition that my wife and I helped him each year to harvest his crops, until the debt was paid in full. This agreement, for my wife and I to work for the *bania* without wages, was written on another piece of paper to which I put my thumb-mark. For ten years my wife and I have helped to harvest the *bania's* crops, and each year after the *bania* has made up the account and entered it on the back of the stamped paper he takes my thumb impression on the document. I do not know how much the debt has increased since I took it over. For years I was not able to pay anything towards it, but since I have been working for you I have paid five, seven, and thirteen rupees— twenty-five rupees altogether.' Budhu had never dreamed of repudiating the debt. To repudiate a debt was unthinkable: not only would it blacken his own face, but, what was far worse, it would blacken the reputation of his father and grandfather. So he continued to pay what he could in cash and in labour, and lived on without hope of ever liquidating the debt; on his death, it would be passed on to his eldest son.

Having elicited from Budhu the information that there was a Vakil (An advocate, or a lawyer) in the village in which the *bania* lived, and taken his name and address, I told Budhu to return to work and said I would see what could be done with the *bania*. Thereafter followed a long correspondence with an advocate, or lawyer. The Vakil, a stout-hearted Brahmin, who became a firm ally after the *bania* had insulted him by ordering him out of his house and telling him to mind his own business. From the Vakil I learnt

that the bhai khata inherited by the *bania* from his father could not be produced in a court of law as evidence, for it bore the thumb-marks of men long since dead. The *bania* had tricked Budhu into executing a document which clearly stated that Budhu had borrowed one hundred and fifty rupees at a rate of twenty-five per cent, interest. The Vakil advised me not to contest the case for the document Budhu had executed was valid, and Budhu had admitted its validity by paying three installments as part interest, and putting his thumb- mark to these payments on the document. When I had sent the Vakil a money order in full satisfaction of the debt, plus interest at twenty-five per cent., the *bania* surrendered the legal document; but he refused to surrender the private agreement binding Budhu and his wife to work without wages on harvesting his crops. It was only when I threatened, on the Vakil's advice, to prosecute for extortion that he handed the agreement over to the Vakil.

Budhu was very uneasy while these transactions were dragging on. He never spoke to me on the subject, but I could see from the way in which he looked at me whenever I passed him at work that he was speculating as to whether he had been wise in leaving me to deal with the all-powerful *bania*, and what his position would be if the *bania* suddenly appeared and demanded an explanation for his conduct. And then one day I received by registered post a heavily sealed letter containing a much thumb-marked legal document, an agreement also thumb-marked, a stamped receipt for the Vakil's fees, and a letter informing me that Budhu was now a free man. The whole transaction had cost me two hundred and twenty-five rupees.

Budhu was leaving work that evening when I met him, took the documents out of the envelope, and told him to hold them while I set a match to them. 'No, Sahib, no', he said. 'You must not burn these papers, for I am now your slave and, God willing, I will one day pay off my debt to you.' Not only did Budhu never smile but he was also a very silent man. When I told him that, as he would not let me burn the papers, he could keep them, he only put his hands together and touched my feet; but when he raised his head and turned to walk away, tears were ploughing furrows down his coal-grimed face.

Only one of millions freed of a debt that had oppressed three generations, but had the number been legion my pleasure could not have been greater, nor could any words have affected me more deeply than Budhu's mute gesture, and the tears that blinded him as he stumbled away to tell his wife that the bania's debt had been paid and that they were free.



## *Lalajee*

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THE passenger steamer was late in arriving from Samaria Ghat. I was standing on the landing stage, watching the passengers disembark and hurry up the ramp to the broad-gauge train, which I had arranged to detain a few minutes for them. Last to leave the steamer was a thin man with eyes sunk deep in their sockets, wearing a patched suit which in the days of long ago had been white, and carrying a small bundle tied up in a coloured handkerchief. By clutching the handrail of the gangway for support, he managed to gain the landing stage, but he turned off at the ramp, walked with slow and feeble steps to the edge of the river, and was violently and repeatedly sick. Having stooped to wash his face, he opened his bundle, took from it a sheet, spread it on the bank, and lay down with the Ganges water lapping the soles of his feet. Evidently he had no intention of catching the train, for when the warning bell rang and the engine whistled, he made no movement. He was lying on his back, and when I told him he had missed his train he opened his sunken eyes to look up at me and said, 'I have no need of trains, Sahib, for I am dying'.

It was the mango season, the hottest time of the year, when cholera is always at its worst. When the man passed me at the foot of the gangway I suspected he was suffering from cholera, and my suspicions were confirmed when I saw him being violently sick. In reply to my questions the man said he was travelling alone, and had no friends at Mokameh Ghat, so I helped him to his feet and led him the two hundred yards that separated my bungalow from the Ganges. Then I made him comfortable in my punkah coolie's house, which was empty, and detached from the servants' quarters. I had been at Mokameh Ghat ten years, employing a large labour force. Some of the people lived under my supervision in houses provided by me, and the balance lived in surrounding villages. I had seen enough of cholera among my own people and also among the villagers to make me pray that if I ever contracted the hateful and foul disease some Good Samaritan would take pity on me and put a bullet through my head, or give me an overdose of opium. Few will agree with me that of the tens of



thousands of people reported as having died of cholera each year at least half die not of cholera but of fear. We, who live in India, as distinct from those who visit the country for a longer or shorter period, are fatalists, believing that a man cannot die before his allotted time. This, however, does not mean that we are indifferent to epidemic diseases. Cholera is dreaded throughout the land, and when it comes in epidemic form as many die of stark fear as die of the actual disease. There was no question that the man in my punkah coolie's house was suffering from a bad attack of cholera and if he was to survive, his faith and my crude treatment alone would pull him through; for the only medical aid within miles was a brute of a doctor, as callous as he was inefficient, and whose fat oily throat I am convinced I should have one day had the pleasure of cutting had not a young probationer clerk, who had been sent to me to train, found a less messy way of removing this medico who was hated by the whole staff. This young hopeful gained the confidence of the doctor and of his wife, both of whom were thoroughly immoral, and who confided to the clerk that they greatly missed the fleshpots of Egypt and the pleasures they had enjoyed before coming to Mokameh Ghat. This information set the clerk thinking, and a few nights later, and a little before the passenger steamer was due to leave for Samaria Ghat, a letter was delivered to the doctor, on reading which he told his wife that he had been summoned to Samaria Ghat to attend an urgent case and that he would be absent all night. He spruced himself up before leaving the house, was met outside by the clerk, and conducted in great secrecy to an empty room at the end of a block of buildings in which one of my pointsmen had died a few nights previously of coal-gas poisoning.

After the doctor had been waiting some time in the room, which had a single solid door and a small grated window, the door opened to admit a heavily veiled figure and was then pulled to and locked on the outside.

I was returning late that night through the goods sheds and overheard part of a very animated conversation between the probationer clerk and a companion he was relieving on night duty. Next morning on my way to work I saw a crowd of men in front of the late pointsman's quarters and was informed, by a most innocent-looking spectator, that there appeared to be

someone inside, though the door was padlocked on the outside. I told my informant to get a hammer and break the lock off and hurried away on my lawful occasions, for I had no desire to witness the discomfiture, richly as it was deserved, of the man and his wife when the door was broken open. Three entries appear in my diary for that date: '(i) Doctor and his wife left on urgent private affairs. (2) Shiv Deb probationer confirmed as a Tally Clerk on salary of twenty rupees per month. (3) Lock, points, alleged to have been run over by engine, replaced by new one.' And that was the last Mokameh Ghat ever saw of the man who was a disgrace to the honourable profession he claimed to belong to. I could not spare much time to nurse the thin man for I already had three cholera patients on my hands. From my servants I could expect no help, for they were of a different caste to the sufferer, and further, there was no justification for exposing them to the risk of infection. However, this did not matter, provided I could instil sufficient confidence into the man that my treatment was going to make him well. To this end I made it very clear to him that I had not brought him into my compound to die, and to give me the trouble of cremating him, but to make him well, and that it was only with his co-operation that this could be effected. That first night I feared that in spite of our joint efforts he would die, but towards morning he rallied and from then on his condition continued to improve and all that remained to be done was to build up his strength, which cholera drains out of the human body more quickly than any other disease. At the end of a week he was able to give me his story.

He was a Lala, a merchant, and at one time possessed a flourishing grain business; then he made the mistake of taking as partner a man about whom he knew nothing. For a few years the business prospered and all went well, but one day when he returned from a long journey he found the shop empty, and his partner gone. The little money in his possession was only sufficient to meet his personal debts, and bereft of credit he had to seek employment. This he found with a merchant with whom he had traded, and for ten years he had worked on seven rupees a month, which was only sufficient to support himself and his son— his wife having died shortly after his partner robbed him. He was on his way from Muzaffarpur to Gaya, on his master's business, when he was taken ill in the train. As he got worse on board the

ferry steamer, he had crawled ashore to die on the banks of the sacred Ganges.

Lalajee— I never knew him by any other name— stayed with me for about a month, and then one day he requested permission to continue his journey to Gaya. The request was made as we were walking through the sheds, for Lalajee was strong enough now to accompany me for a short distance each morning when I set out for work, and when I asked him what he would do if on arrival at Gaya he found his master had filled his place, he said he would try to find other employment. ‘Why not try to get someone to help you to be a merchant again?’ I asked; and he replied: ‘The thought of being a merchant once again, and able to educate my son, is with me night and day, Sahib, but there is no one in all the world who would trust me, a servant on seven rupees a month and without any security to offer, with the five hundred rupees I should need to give me a new start.’ The train for Gaya left at 8 p.m. and when that evening I returned to the bungalow a little before that hour, I found Lalajee with freshly washed clothes, and a bundle in his hand a little bigger than the one he had arrived with, waiting in the veranda to say goodbye to me. When I put a ticket for Gaya and five one- hundred rupee notes into his hand he, like the man with the coal-grimed face, was tongue tied. All he could do was to keep glancing from the notes in his hand to my face, until the bell that warned passengers the train would leave in five minutes rang; then, putting his head on my feet, he said: ‘Within one year your slave will return you this money.’

And so Lalajee left me, taking with him the greater part of my savings. That I would see him again I never doubted, for the poor of India never forget a kindness; but the promise Lalajee had made was, I felt sure, beyond his powers of accomplishment. In this I was wrong, for returning late one evening I saw a man dressed in spotless white standing in my veranda. The light from the room behind him was in my eyes, and I did not recognize him until he spoke. It was Lalajee, come a few days before the expiry of the time limit he had set himself. That night as he sat on the floor near my chair he told me of his trading transactions, and the success that had attended them. Starting with a few bags of grain and being content with a profit of only four annas per bag he had gradually, and steadily, built up his business

until he was able to deal in consignments up to thirty tons in weight, on which he was making a profit of three rupees per ton. His son was in a good school, and as he could now afford to keep a wife he had married the daughter of a rich merchant of Patna; all this he had accomplished in a little under twelve months. As the time drew near for his train to leave he laid five one-hundred rupee notes on my knee. Then, he took a bag from his pocket, held it out to me and said, 'This is the interest, calculated at twenty-five per cent., that I owe you on the money you lent me'. I believe I deprived him of half the pleasure he had anticipated from his visit when I told him it was not our custom to accept interest from our friends. Before leaving me Lalajee said, 'during the month I stayed with you I had talks with your servants, and with your workmen, and I learnt from them that there was a time when you were reduced to one *chapati* and a little dal. If such a time should ever come again, which Parmeshwar forbid, your slave will place all that he has at your feet.' Until I left Mokameh Ghat, eleven years later, I received each year a big basket of the choicest mangoes from Lala-jee's garden, for he attained his ambition of becoming a merchant once again, and returned to the home he had left when his partner robbed him.



## *Chamari*

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**C**HAMARI, as his name implies, belonged to the lowest strata of India's sixty million Untouchables. Accompanied by his wife, an angular person whose face was stamped with years of suffering and whose two young children were clutching her torn skirts, he applied to me for work. Chamari was an undersized man with a poor physique, and as he was not strong enough to work in the sheds I put him and his wife on to trans-shipping coal. Next morning I provided the pair of them with shovels and baskets, and they started work with courage and industry far beyond their strength. Towards evening I had to put others on to finishing their task, for the delay in unloading one of a rake of fifty wagons meant hanging up the work of several hundred labourers. For two days Chamari and his wife laboured valiantly but ineffectively. On the third morning when, their blistered hands tied up in dirty rags, they were waiting for work to be allotted to them I asked Chamari if he could read and write. When he said that he knew a little Hindi, I instructed him to return the shovels and baskets to the store and to come to my office for orders. A few days previously I had discharged the headman of the coal gang for his inability to keep sober — the only man I ever discharged — and as it was quite evident that neither Chamari nor his wife would be able to make a living at the job they were on, I decided to give Chamari a trial as a headman.

Chamari thought he had been summoned to the office to be sacked and was greatly relieved, and very proud, when I handed him a new account book and a pencil and told him to take down the numbers of the rake of broad-gauge wagons from which coal was being unloaded, together with the names of the men and women who were engaged on each wagon. Half an hour later he returned with the information I had asked for, neatly entered in the book. When I had verified the correctness of these entries I handed the book back to Chamari, told him I had appointed him headman of the coal gang, at that time numbering two hundred men and women, and explained his duties to him in detail. A humble man who one short hour earlier had laboured under all the disqualifications of his lowly birth walked

out of my office with a book tucked under his arm, a pencil behind his ear and, for the first time in his life, his head in the air. Chamari was one of the most conscientious and hardworking men I have ever employed. In the gang he commanded there were men and women of all castes including Brahmins, Chattris, and Thakurs, and never once did he offend by rendering less respect to these high-caste men and women than was theirs by birthright, and never once was his authority questioned. He was responsible for keeping the individual accounts of everyone working under him, and during the twenty years he worked for me the correctness of his accounts was never disputed.

On Sunday evenings Chamari and I would sit, he on a mat and I on a stool, with a great pile of copper pice between us, and ringed round by coal-grimed men and women eagerly waiting for their week's wages. I enjoyed those Sunday evenings as much as did the simple hardworking people sitting round me, for my pleasure in giving them the wages they had earned with the sweat of their brows was as great as theirs in receiving them.

During the week they worked on a platform half a mile long, and as some of them lived in the quarters I had built for them, while others lived in the surrounding villages, they had little opportunity for social intercourse. Sunday evenings gave them this opportunity, and they took full advantage of it. Hardworking people are always cheerful, for they have no time to manufacture imaginary troubles, which are always worse than real ones. My people were admittedly poor, and they had their full share of troubles; none the less they were full of good cheer, and as I could understand and speak their language as well as they could, I was able to take part in their light-hearted banter and appreciate all their jokes. The railway paid me by weight and I paid my people, both those who worked in the sheds and those who worked on the coal platform, at wagon rates. For work in the sheds I paid the headmen, who in turn paid the gangs employed by them, but the men and women working on coal were paid individually by me. Chamari would change the currency notes I gave him for pice in the Mokameh bazaar, and then, on Sunday evenings, as we sat with the pile of pice between us he would read out the names of the men and women who had been engaged on unloading every individual wagon during the week, while

I made a quick mental calculation and paid the amount due to each worker. I paid forty pice (ten annas) for the unloading of each wagon, and when the pice would not divide up equally among the number that had been engaged on unloading any particular wagon I gave the extra pice to one of their number, who would later purchase salt to be divided among them. This system of payment worked to the satisfaction of everyone, and though the work was hard, and the hours long, the wage earned was three times as much as could be earned on field work, and further, my work was permanent while field work was seasonal and temporary.

I started Chamari on a salary of fifteen rupees a month and gradually increased it to forty rupees, which was more than the majority of the clerks employed by the railway were getting, and in addition I allowed him to employ a gang of ten men to work in the sheds. In India a man's worth is assessed, to a great extent, by the money he is earning and the use he makes of it. Chamari was held in great respect by all sections of the community for the good wages he was earning, but he was held in even greater respect for the unobtrusive use he made of his money. Having known hunger he made it his business to see that no one whom he could succour suffered as he had suffered. All of his own lowly caste who passed his door were welcome to share his food, and those whose caste prohibited them from eating the food cooked by his wife were provided with material to enable them to prepare their own food. When at his wife's request I spoke to Chamari on the subject of keeping open house, his answer invariably was that he and his family had found the fifteen rupees per month, on which I had engaged him, sufficient for their personal requirements and that to allow his wife more than that sum now would only encourage her to be extravagant. When I asked what form her extravagance was likely to take he said she was always nagging him about his clothes and telling him he should be better dressed than the men who were working under him, whereas he thought money spent on clothes could be better spent on feeding the poor. Then to clinch the argument he said: 'Look at yourself, Maharaj,' — he had addressed me thus from the first day, and continued so to address me to the end— 'you have been wearing that suit for years, and if you can do that, why can't I?' As a matter of fact he was wrong about the suit, for I had two of the same material, one being cleaned of coal dust while the other was in use.

I had been at Mokameh Ghat sixteen years when Kaiser Wilhelm started his war. The railway opposed my joining up but gave their consent when I agreed to retain the contract. It was impossible to explain the implications of the war to my people at the conference to which I summoned them. However, each and every one of them was willing to carry on during my absence, and it was entirely due to their loyalty and devotion that traffic through Mokameh Ghat flowed smoothly and without a single hitch during the years I was serving, first in France, and later in Waziristan. Ram Saran acted as Trans-shipment Inspector during my absence, and when I returned after four years I resumed contact with my people with the pleasant feeling that I had only been away from them for a day. My safe return was attributed by them to the prayers they had offered up for me in temple and mosque, and at private shrines.

The summer after my return from the war cholera was bad throughout Bengal, and at one time two women and a man of the coal gang were stricken down by the disease. Chamari and I nursed the sufferers by turns, instilling confidence into them, and by sheer will power brought them through. Shortly thereafter I heard someone moving in my veranda one night— I had the bungalow to myself, for Storrar had left on promotion—and on my asking, who it was, a voice out of the darkness said, ‘I am Chamari’s wife. I have come to tell you that he has cholera’. Telling the woman to wait I hastily donned some clothes, lit a lantern, and set off with her armed with astick, for Mokameh Ghat was infested with poisonous snakes.

Chamari had been at work all that day and in the afternoon had accompanied me to a nearby village in which a woman of his coal gang, by the name of Parbatti, was reported to be seriously ill. Parbatti, a widow with three children, was the first woman to volunteer to work for me when I arrived at Mokameh Ghat and for twenty years she had worked unflaggingly. Always cheerful and happy and willing to give a helping hand to any who needed it, she was the life and soul of the Sunday evening gatherings, for, being a widow, she could bandy words with all and sundry without offending India’s very strict Mother Grundy.



The boy who brought me the news that she was ill did not know what ailed her, but was convinced that she was dying, so I armed myself with a few simple remedies and calling for Chamari on the way hurried to the village. We found Parbatti lying on the floor of her hut with her head in her grey-haired mother's lap. It was the first case of tetanus I had ever seen, and I hope the last I shall ever see. Parbatti's teeth, which would have made the fortune of a film star, had been broken in an attempt to lever them apart, to give her water. She was conscious, but unable to speak, and the torments she was enduring are beyond any words of mine to describe. There was nothing I could do to give her relief beyond massaging the tense muscles of her throat to try to ease her breathing, and while I was doing this, her body was convulsed as though she had received an electric shock. Mercifully her heart stopped beating, and her sufferings ended. Chamari and I had no words to exchange as we walked away from the humble home in which preparations were already under way for the cremation ceremony, for though an ocean of prejudices had lain between the high-caste woman and us it had made no difference to our affection for her, and we both knew that we would miss the cheerful hardworking little woman more than either of us cared to admit. I had not seen Chamari again that evening, for work had taken me to Samaria Ghat; and now his wife had come to tell me he was suffering from cholera.

We in India loathe and dread cholera but we are not frightened of infection, possibly because we are fatalists, and I was not surprised therefore to find a number of men squatting on the floor round Chamari's string bed. The room was dark, but he recognized me in the light of the lantern I was carrying and said, 'Forgive the woman for having called you at this hour.'— it was 2 a.m.— 'I ordered her not to disturb you until morning, and she disobeyed me.' Chamari had left me, apparently in good health, ten hours previously and I was shocked to see the change those few hours had made in his appearance. Always a thin, lightly built man, he appeared to have shrunk to half his size; his eyes had sunk deep into their sockets, and his voice was weak and little more than a whisper. It was oppressively hot in the room, so I covered his partly naked body with a sheet and made the men carry the bed out into the open courtyard. It was a public place for a man suffering from cholera to be in, but better a public

place than a hot room in which there was not sufficient air for a man in his condition to breathe. Chamari and I had fought many cases of cholera together and he knew, none better, the danger of panicking and the necessity for unbounded faith in the simple remedies at my command. Heroically he fought the foul disease, never losing hope and taking everything I offered him to combat the cholera and sustain his strength. Hot as it was, he was cold, and the only way I was able to maintain any heat in his body was by placing a brazier with hot embers under his bed, and getting helpers to rub powdered ginger into the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. For forty- eight hours the battle lasted, every minute being desperately contested with death, and then the gallant little man fell into a coma, his pulse fading out and his breathing becoming hardly perceptible. From midnight to a little after 4 a.m. he lay in this condition, and I knew that my friend would never rally. Hushed people who had watched with me during those long hours were either sitting on the ground or standing round when Chamari suddenly sat up and in an urgent and perfectly natural voice said, 'Maharaj, Maharaj! Where are you?' I was standing at the head of the bed, and when I leant forward and put my hand on his shoulder he caught it in both of his and said, 'Maharaj, Parmeshwar is calling me, and I must go'. Then, putting his hands together and bowing his head, he said, 'Parmeshwar, I come'. He was dead when I laid him back on the bed.

Possibly a hundred people of all castes were present and heard Chamari's last words, and among them was a stranger, with sandalwood caste-marks on his forehead. When I laid the wasted frame down on the bed the stranger asked who the dead man was and, when told that he was Chamari, said: 'I have found what I have long been searching for. I am a priest of the great Vishnu temple at Kashi. My master the head priest, hearing of the good deeds of this man, sent me to find him and take him to the temple that he might have *darshan* of him. And now I will go back to my master and tell him Chamari is dead, and I will repeat to him the words I heard Chamari say.' Then, having laid the bundle he was carrying on the ground, and slipped off his sandals, this Brahmin priest approached the foot of the bed and made obeisance to the dead Untouchable.

There will never again be a funeral like Chamari's at Mokameh Ghat, for all sections of the community, high and low, rich and poor, Hindu, Mohammedan, Untouchable, and Christian, turned out to pay their last respects to one who had arrived friendless and weighed down with disqualifications, and who left respected by all and loved by many. Chamari was a heathen, according to our Christian belief, and the lowest of India's Untouchables, but if I am privileged to go where he has gone, I shall be content.



## *Life at Mokameh Ghat*

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**M**Y men and I did not spend all our time at Mokameh Ghat working and sleeping. Work at the start had been very strenuous for all of us, and continued to be so, but as time passed and hands hardened and back-muscles developed, we settled down in our collars, and as we were pulling in the same direction with a common object— better conditions for those dependent on us— work moved smoothly and allowed of short periods for recreation. The reputation we had earned for ourselves by clearing the heavy accumulation of goods at Mokameh Ghat, and thereafter keeping the traffic moving, was something that all of us had contributed towards, and all of us took a pride in having earned this reputation and were determined to retain it. When therefore an individual absented himself to attend to private affairs, his work was cheerfully performed by his companions.

One of my first undertakings, when I had a little time to myself and a few rupees in my pocket, was to start a school for the sons of my workmen, and for the sons of the lower paid railway staff. The idea originated with Ram Saran, who was a keen educationist, possibly because of the few opportunities he himself had had for education. Between us we rented a hut, installed a master, and the school— known ever afterwards as Ram Saran's School— started with a membership of twenty boys. Caste prejudices were the first snag we ran up against, but our master soon circumnavigated it by removing the sides of the hut. For whereas high- and low-caste boys could not sit together in cold brittle air the same hut, there was no objection to their sitting in the same shed. From the very start the school was a great success, thanks entirely to Ram Saran's unflagging interest. When suitable buildings had been erected, an additional seven masters employed, and the students increased to two hundred, the Government relieved us of our financial responsibilities. They raised the school to the status of a Middle School and rewarded Ram Saran, to the delight of all his friends, by conferring on him the title of Rai Sahib.

Tom Kelly, Ram Saran's opposite number on the broad-gauge railway, was a keen sportsman, and he and I started a recreation club. We cleared a plot of ground, marked out a football and a hockey ground, erected goal-posts, purchased a football and hockey sticks, and started to train each his own football and hockey team. The training for football was comparatively easy, but not so the training for hockey, for as our means did not run to the regulation hockey stick we purchased what at that time was known as a Khalsa stick: this was made in the Punjab from a blackthorn or small oak tree, the root being bent to a suitable angle to form the crook. The casualties at the start were considerable, for 98 per cent, of the players were bare footed, the sticks were heavy and devoid of lapping, and the ball used was made of wood. When our teams had learnt the rudiments of the two games, which amounted to no more than knowing in which direction to propel the ball, we started inter-railway matches.

The matches were enjoyed as much by the spectators as by us who took part in them. Kelly was stouter than he would have admitted to being and always played in goal for his side, or for our team when we combined to play out- station teams.

I was thin and light and played centre forward and was greatly embarrassed when I was accidentally tripped up by foot or by hockey stick, for when this happened all the players, with the exception of Kelly, abandoned the game to set me on my feet and dust my clothes. On one occasion while I was receiving these attentions, one of the opposing team dribbled the ball down the field and was prevented from scoring a goal by the spectators, who impounded the ball and arrested the player!

Shortly after we started the recreation club the Bengal and North Western Railway built a club house and made a tennis court for their European staff which, including myself, numbered four. Kelly was made an honorary member of the club, and a very useful member he proved, for he was good at both billiards and tennis. Kelly and I were not able to indulge in tennis more than two or three times a month, but when the day's work was done we spent many pleasant evenings together playing billiards.

The goods sheds and sidings at Mokameh Ghat were over a mile and a half long, and to save Kelly unnecessary walking his railway provided him with a rail trolley and four men to push it. This trolley was a great joy to Kelly and myself, for during the winter months, when the barheaded and greylag geese were in, and the moon was at or near the full, we trolled down the main line for nine miles to where there were a number of small tanks. These tanks, some of which were only a few yards across while others were an acre or more in extent, were surrounded by lentil crops which gave us ample cover. We timed ourselves to arrive at the tanks as the sun was setting, and shortly after we had taken up our positions— Kelly at one of the tanks and I at another— we would see the geese coming.

The geese, literally tens of thousands of them, spent the day on the islands in the Ganges and in the evening left the islands to feed on the weeds in the tanks, or on the ripening wheat and grain crops beyond. After crossing the railway line, which was half-way between our positions and the Ganges, the geese would start losing height, and they passed over our heads within easy range. Shooting by moonlight needs a little practice, for birds flying overhead appear to be farther off than they actually are and one is apt to fire too far ahead of them. When this happened, the birds, seeing the flash of the gun and hearing the report, sprang straight up in the air and before they flattened out again were out of range of the second barrel. Those winter evenings when the full moon was rising over the palm-trees that fringed the river, and the cold brittle air throbbed and reverberated with the honking of geese and the swish of their wings as they passed overhead in flights of from ten to a hundred, are among the happiest of my recollections of the years I spent at Mokameh Ghat.

My work was never dull, and time never hung heavy on my hands, for in addition to arranging for the crossing of the Ganges, and the handling at Mokameh Ghat of a million tons of goods, I was responsible for the running of the steamers that ferried several hundred thousand passengers annually between the two banks of the river. The crossing of the river, which after heavy rains in the Himalayas was four to five miles wide, was always a pleasure to me, not only because it gave me time to rest my legs and have a quiet smoke but also because it gave me an opportunity of indulging in one

of my hobbies—the study of human beings. The ferry was a link between two great systems of railways, one radiating north and the other radiating south, and among the seven hundred passengers who crossed at each trip were people from all parts of India, and from countries beyond her borders. One morning I was leaning over the upper deck of the steamer watching the third-class passengers taking their seats on the lower deck. With me was a young man from England who had recently joined the railway, and who had been sent to me to study the system of work at Mokameh Ghat. He had spent a fortnight with me and I was now accompanying him across the river to Samaria Ghat to see him off on his long railway journey to Gorakh-pur. Sitting cross-legged, or tailor wise, on a bench next to me and also looking down on the lower deck was an Indian. Crosthwaite, my young companion, was very enthusiastic about everything in the country in which he had come to serve, and as we watched the chattering crowds accommodating themselves on the open deck he remarked that he would dearly love to know who these people were, and why they were travelling from one part of India to another. The crowd, packed like sardines, had now settled down, so I said I would try to satisfy his curiosity. Let us start, I said, at the right and work round the deck, taking only the outer fringe of people who have their backs to the rail. The three men nearest to us are Brahmins, and the big copper vessels, sealed with wet clay, that they are so carefully guarding, contain Ganges water. The water on the right bank of the Ganges is considered to be more holy than the water on the left bank and these three Brahmins, servants of a well-known Maharaja, have filled the vessels on the right bank and are taking the water eighty miles by river and rail for the personal use of the Maharaja who, even when he is travelling, never uses any but Ganges water for domestic purposes. The man next to the Brahmins is a Mohammedan, a dhoonia by profession. He travels from station to station teasing the cotton in old and lumpy mattresses with the harp-like implement lying on the deck beside him. With this implement he teases old cotton until it resembles floss silk. Next to him are two Tibetan lamas who are returning from a pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist shrine at Gaya, and who, even on this winter morning, are feeling hot, as you can see from the beads of sweat standing out on their foreheads. Next to the lamas are a group of four men returning from a pilgrimage to Benares, to their home on the foothills of Nepal. Each of the four men, as you can see, has two blown-

glass jars, protected with wickerwork, slung to a short bamboo pole. These jars contain water which they have drawn from the Ganges at Benares and which they will sell drop by drop in their own and adjoining villages for religious ceremonies.

And so on round the deck until I came to the last man on the left. This man, I told Crosthwaite, was an old friend of mine, the father of one of my workmen, who was crossing the river to plough his field on the left bank.

Crosthwaite listened with great interest to all I had told him about the passengers on the lower deck, and he now asked me who the man was who was sitting on the bench near us. 'Oh', I said, 'he is a Mohammedan gentleman. A hide merchant on his way from Gaya to Muzaffarpur.' As I ceased speaking the man on the bench unfolded his legs, placed his feet on the deck and started laughing. Then turning to me he said in perfect English, 'I have been greatly entertained listening to the description you have given your friend of the men on the deck below us, and also of your description of me. My tan hid my blushes, for I had assumed that he did not know English. 'I believe that with one exception, myself, your descriptions were right in every case. I am a Mohammedan as you say, and I am travelling from Gaya to Muzaffarpur, though how you know this I cannot think for I have not shown my railway ticket to anyone since I purchased it at Gaya. But you were wrong in describing me as a hide merchant. I do not deal in hides. I deal in tobacco.' On occasions special trains were run for important personages, and in connexion with these trains a special ferry steamer was run, for the timings of which I was responsible. I met one afternoon one of these special trains, which was conveying the Prime Minister of Nepal, twenty ladies of his household, a Secretary, and a large retinue of servants from Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, to Calcutta. As the train came to a standstill a blond-headed giant in Nepalese national dress jumped down from the train and went to the carriage in which the Prime Minister was travelling. Here the man opened a big umbrella, put his back to the door of the carriage, lifted his right arm and placed his hand on his hip. Presently the door behind him opened and the Prime Minister appeared, carrying a gold-headed cane in his hand. With practiced ease the Prime Minister took his seat on the man's arm and when he had made himself comfortable the



man raised the umbrella over the Prime Minister's head and set off. He carried his burden as effortlessly as another would have carried a celluloid doll on his 300-yard walk, over loose sand, to the steamer. When I remarked to the Secretary, with whom I was acquainted, that I had never seen a greater feat of strength, he informed me that the Prime Minister always used the blond giant in the way I had just seen him being used, when other means of transport were not available. I was told that the man was a Nepalese, but my guess was that he was a national of northern Europe who for reasons best known to himself, or to his masters, had accepted service in an independent state on the borders of India.

While the Prime Minister was being conveyed to the steamer, four attendants produced a rectangular piece of black silk, some twelve feet long and eight feet wide, which they laid on the sand close to a carriage, which had all its windows closed. The rectangle was fitted with loops at the four corners, and when hooks at the ends of four eight-foot silver staves had been inserted into the loops, and the staves stood on end, the rectangle revealed itself as a box-like structure without a bottom. One end of this structure was now raised to the level of the door of the closed carriage, and out of the carriage and into the silk box stepped the twenty ladies of the Prime Minister's household. With the stave-bearers walking on the outside of the box and only the twinkling patent-leather-shod feet of the ladies showing, the procession set off for the steamer. On the lower deck of the steamer one end of the box was raised and the ladies, all of whom appeared to be between sixteen and eighteen years of age, ran lightly up the stairway on to the upper deck, where I was talking to the Prime Minister. On a previous occasion I had suggested leaving the upper deck when the ladies arrived and had been told there was no necessity for me to do so and that the silk box was only intended to prevent the common men from seeing the ladies of the household. It is not possible for me to describe in detail the dress of the ladies, and all I can say is that in their gaily coloured, tight-fitting bodices and wide-spreading trousers, in the making of each of which forty yards of fine silk had been used, they looked, as they flitted from side to side of the steamer in an effort to see all that was to be seen, like rare and gorgeous butterflies. At Mokameh Ghat the same procedure was adopted to convey the Prime Minister and his ladies from the steamer to their special

train, and when the whole party, and their mountain of luggage, were on board, the train steamed off on its way to Calcutta. Ten days later the party returned and I saw them off at Samaria Ghat on their way to Katmandu.

A few days later I was working on a report that had to go in that night when my friend the Secretary walked into my office. With his clothes dirty and creased, and looking as though they had been slept in for many nights, he presented a very different appearance from the spruce and well-dressed official I had last seen in company with the Prime Minister. He accepted the chair I offered him and said, without any preamble, that he was in great trouble. The following is the story he told me.

‘On the last day of our visit to Calcutta the Prime Minister took the ladies of his household to the shop of Hamilton and Co., the leading jewellers in the city, and told them to select the jewels they fancied. The jewels were paid for in silver rupees for, as you know, we always take sufficient cash with us from Nepal to pay all our expenses and for everything we purchase. The selection of the jewels, the counting of the cash, the packing of the jewels into the suit-case I had taken to the shop for the purpose, and the sealing of the case by the jeweller, all took more time than we had anticipated. The result was that we had to dash back to our hotel, collect our luggage and retinue, and hurry to the station where our special train was waiting for us.

‘We arrived back in Katmandu in the late evening, and the following morning the Prime Minister sent for me and asked for the suit-case containing the jewels. Every room in the palace was searched and everyone who had been on the trip to Calcutta was questioned, yet no trace of the suit-case was found, nor would anyone admit having seen it at any time. I remembered having taken it out of the motor-car that conveyed me from the shop to the hotel, but thereafter I could not remember having seen it at any stage of the journey. I am personally responsible for the case and its contents and if it is not recovered I may lose more than my job, for according to the laws of our land I have committed a great crime.

‘There is in Nepal a hermit who is credited with second sight, and on the advice of my friends I went to him. I found the hermit, an old man in tattered clothing, living in a cave on the side of a great mountain, and to him I told my troubles. He listened to me in silence, asked no questions, and told me to return next morning. The following morning I again visited him and he told me that as he lay asleep the previous night he had a vision. In the vision he had seen the suit-case, with its seals intact, in a corner of a room hidden under boxes and bags of many kinds. The room was not far from a big river, had only one door leading into it, and this door was facing the east. This is all the hermit could tell me, so’, the Secretary concluded, with tears in his eyes and a catch in his throat, ‘I obtained permission to leave Nepal for a week and I have come to see if you can help me, for it is possible that the Ganges is the river the hermit saw in his vision.’ In the Himalayas no one doubts the ability of individuals alleged to be gifted with second sight to help in recovering property lost or mislaid. That the Secretary believed what the hermit had told him there was no question, and his anxiety now was to regain possession of the suit-case, containing jewellery valued at Rs.150,000 (£10,000), before others found and rifled it.

There were many rooms at Mokameh Ghat in which a miscellaneous assortment of goods was stored, but none of them answered to the description given by the hermit. I did, however, know of one room that answered to the description, and this room was the parcel office at Mokameh Junction, two miles from Mokameh Ghat. Having borrowed Kelly’s trolly, I sent the Secretary to the Junction with Ram Saran. At the parcel office the clerk in charge denied all knowledge of the suit-case, but he raised no objection to the pile of luggage in the office being taken out on to the platform, and when this had been done, the suit- case was revealed with all its seals intact.

The question then arose as to how the case came to be in the office without the clerk’s knowledge. The station master now came on the scene and his inquiries elicited the fact that the suit-case had been put in the office by a carriage sweeper, the lowest-paid man on the staff. This man had been ordered to sweep out the train in which the Prime Minister had travelled from Calcutta to Mokameh Ghat, and tucked away under the seat in one of

the carriages he had found the suitcase. When his task was finished he carried the suit-case a distance of a quarter of a mile to the platform, and there being no one on the platform at the time to whom he could hand over the case he had put it in a corner of the parcel office. He expressed regret, and asked for forgiveness if he had done anything wrong.

Bachelors and their servants, as a rule, get into more or less set habits and my servants and I were no exception to the rule. Except when work was heavy I invariably returned to my house at 8 p.m. and when my house servant, waiting on the veranda, saw me coming he called to the waterman to lay my bath, for whether it was summer or winter I always had a hot bath. There were three rooms at the front of the house opening on to the veranda: a dining room, a sitting room, and a bedroom. Attached to the bedroom was a small bathroom, ten feet long and six wide. This bathroom had two doors and one small window. One of the doors opened on to the veranda, and the other led to the bedroom. The window was opposite the bedroom door, and set high up in the outer wall of the house. The furniture of the bathroom consisted of an egg-shaped wooden bath, long enough to sit in, a wooden bath-mat with holes in it, and two earthen vessels containing cold water. After the waterman had laid the bath my servant would bolt the outer door of the bathroom and on his way through the bedroom pick up the shoes I had discarded and take them to the kitchen to clean. There he would remain until I called for dinner.

One night after my servant had gone to the kitchen I took a small hand-lamp off the dressing table, went into the bathroom and there placed it on a low wall, six inches high and nine inches wide, which ran half-way across the width of the room. Then I turned and bolted the door, which like most doors in India sagged on its hinges and would not remain shut unless bolted. I had spent most of that day on the coal platform so did not spare the soap, and with a lather on my head and face that did credit to the manufacturers I opened my eyes to replace the soap on the bath-mat and, to my horror, saw the head of a snake projecting up over the end of the bath and within a few inches of my toes. My movements while soaping my head and splashing the water about had evidently annoyed the snake, a big cobra, for its hood was expanded and its long forked tongue was flicking in and

out of its wicked-looking mouth. The right thing for me to have done would have been to keep my hands moving, draw my feet away from the snake, and moving very slowly stand up and step backwards to the door behind me, keeping my eyes on the snake all the time. But what I very foolishly did was to grab the sides of the bath and stand up and step backwards, all in one movement, on to the low wall. On this cemented wall my foot slipped, and while trying to regain my balance a stream of water ran off my elbow on to the wick of the lamp and extinguished it, plunging the room in pitch darkness. So here I was shut in a small dark room with one of the most deadly snakes in India. One step to the left or one step to the rear would have taken me to either of the two doors, but not knowing where the snake was I was frightened to move for fear of putting my bare foot on it. Moreover, both doors were bolted at the bottom, and even if I avoided stepping on the snake I should have to feel about for the bolts where the snake, in his efforts to get out of the room, was most likely to be.

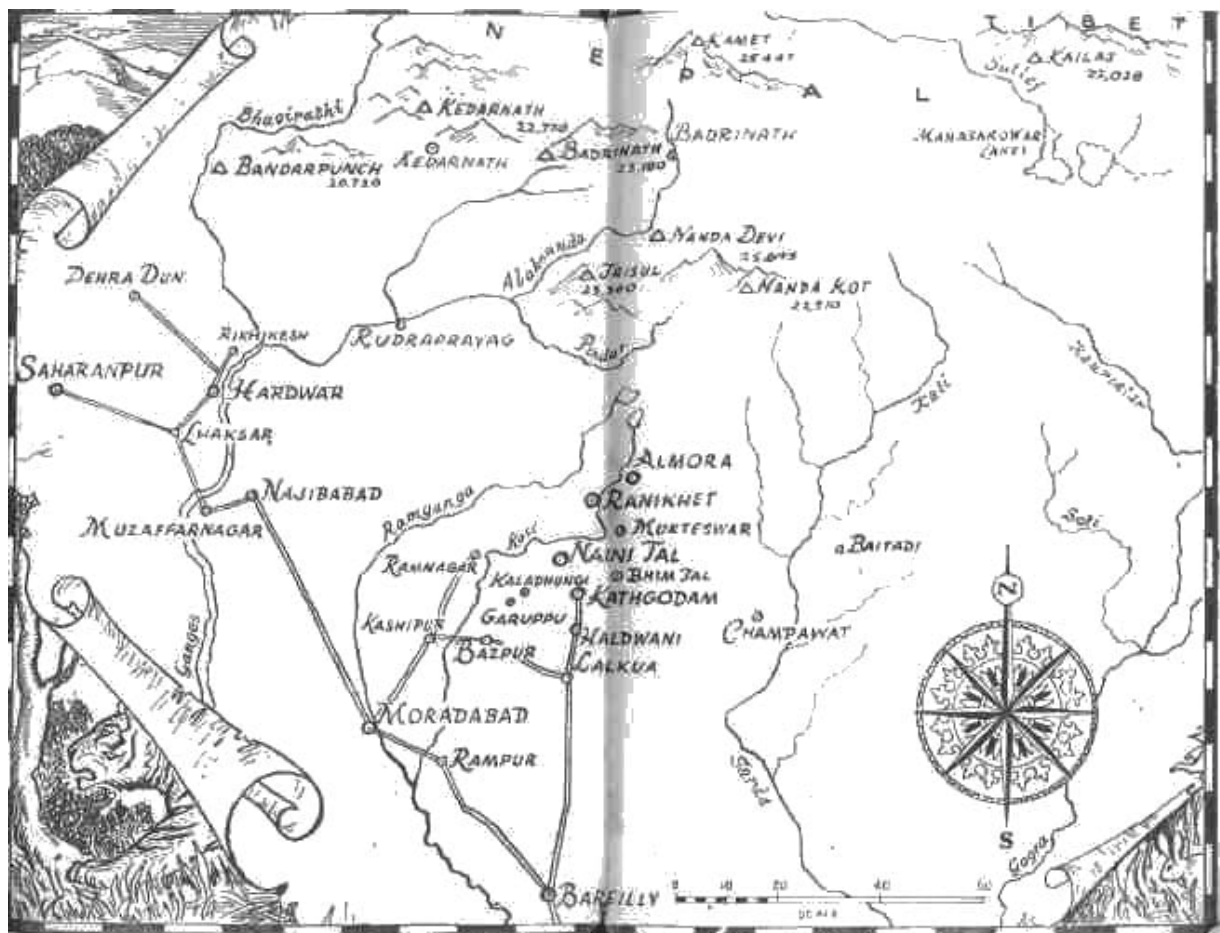
The servants' quarters were in a corner of the compound fifty yards away on the dining-room side of the house, so shouting to them would be of no avail, and my only hope of rescue was that my servant would get tired of waiting for me to call for dinner, or that a friend would come to see me, and I devoutly hoped this would happen before the cobra bit me. The fact that the cobra was as much trapped as I was in no way comforted me, for only a few days previously one of my men had had a similar experience. He had gone into his house in the early afternoon in order to put away the wages I had just paid him. While he was opening his box he heard a hiss behind him, and turning round saw a cobra advancing towards him from the direction of the open door. Backing against the wall behind him, for there was only one door to the room, the unfortunate man had tried to fend off the cobra with his hands, and while doing so was bitten twelve times on hands and on legs. Neighbours heard his cries and came to his rescue, but he died a few minutes later. I learnt that night that small things can be more nerve-racking and terrifying than big happenings. Every drop of water that trickled down my legs was converted in my imagination into the long forked tongue of the cobra licking my bare skin, a prelude to the burying of his fangs in my flesh.

How long I remained in the room with the cobra I cannot say. My servant said later that it was only half an hour, and no sound has ever been more welcome to me than the sounds I heard as my servant laid the table for dinner. I called him to the bathroom door, told him of my predicament, and instructed him to fetch a lantern and a ladder. After another long wait I heard a babel of voices, followed by the scraping of the ladder against the outer wall of the house. When the lantern had been lifted to the window, ten feet above ground, it did not illuminate the room, so I told the man who was holding it to break a pane of glass and pass the lantern through the opening. The opening was too small for the lantern to be passed in upright. However, after it had been relit three times it was finally inserted into the room and, feeling that the cobra was behind me, I turned my head and saw it lying at the bottom of the bedroom door two feet away. Leaning forward very slowly, I picked up the heavy bath-mat, raised it high and let it fall as the cobra was sliding over the floor towards me. Fortunately I judged my aim accurately and the bath mat crashed down on the cobra's neck six inches from its head. As it bit at the wood and lashed about with its tail I took a hasty stride to the veranda door and in a moment was outside among a crowd of men, armed with sticks and carrying lanterns, for word had got round to the railway quarters that I was having a life-and-death struggle with a big snake in a locked room. The pinned-down snake was soon dispatched and it was not until the last of the men had gone, leaving their congratulations, that I realized I had no clothes on and that my eyes were full of soap. How the snake came to be in the bathroom I never knew. It may have entered by one of the doors, or it may have fallen from the roof, which was made of thatch and full of rats and squirrels, and tunnelled with sparrows' nests. Anyway, the servants who had laid my bath and I had much to be thankful for, for we approached that night very near the gate of the Happy Hunting Grounds. We at Mokameh Ghat observed no Hindu or Mohammedan holidays, for no matter what the day was work had to go on. There was, however, one day in the year that all of us looked forward to with anticipation and great pleasure, and that day was Christmas. On this day custom ordained that I should remain in my house until ten o'clock, and punctually at this hour Ram Saran— dressed in his best clothes and wearing an enormous pink silk turban, specially kept for the occasion— would present himself to conduct me to my office. Our funds did not run to

bunting, but we had a large stock of red and green signal flags, and with these flags and strings of marigold and jasmine flowers, Ram Saran and his band of willing helpers, working from early morning, had given the office and its surroundings a gay and festive appearance. Near the office door a table and a chair were set, and on the table stood a metal pot containing a bunch of my best roses tied round with twine as tight as twine could be tied. Ranged in front of the table were the railway staff, my headmen, and all my labourers. And all were dressed in clean clothes, for no matter how dirty we were during the rest of the year, on Christmas Day we had to be clean.

After I had taken my seat on the chair and Ram Saran had put a garland of jasmine round my neck, the proceedings started with a long speech by Ram Saran, followed by a short one by me. Sweets were then distributed to the children, and after this messy proceeding was over to the satisfaction of all concerned, the real business of the day started— the distribution of a cash bonus to Ram Saran, to the staff, and to the labourers. The rates I received for my handling contract were woefully small, but even so, by the willing co-operation of all concerned, I did make a profit, and eighty per cent, of this profit was distributed on Christmas Day. Small as this bonus was— in the good years it amounted to no more than a month's pay, or a month's earnings— it was greatly appreciated, and the goodwill and willing co-operation it ensured enabled me to handle a million tons of goods a year for twenty-one years without one single unpleasant incident, and without one single day's stoppage of work.









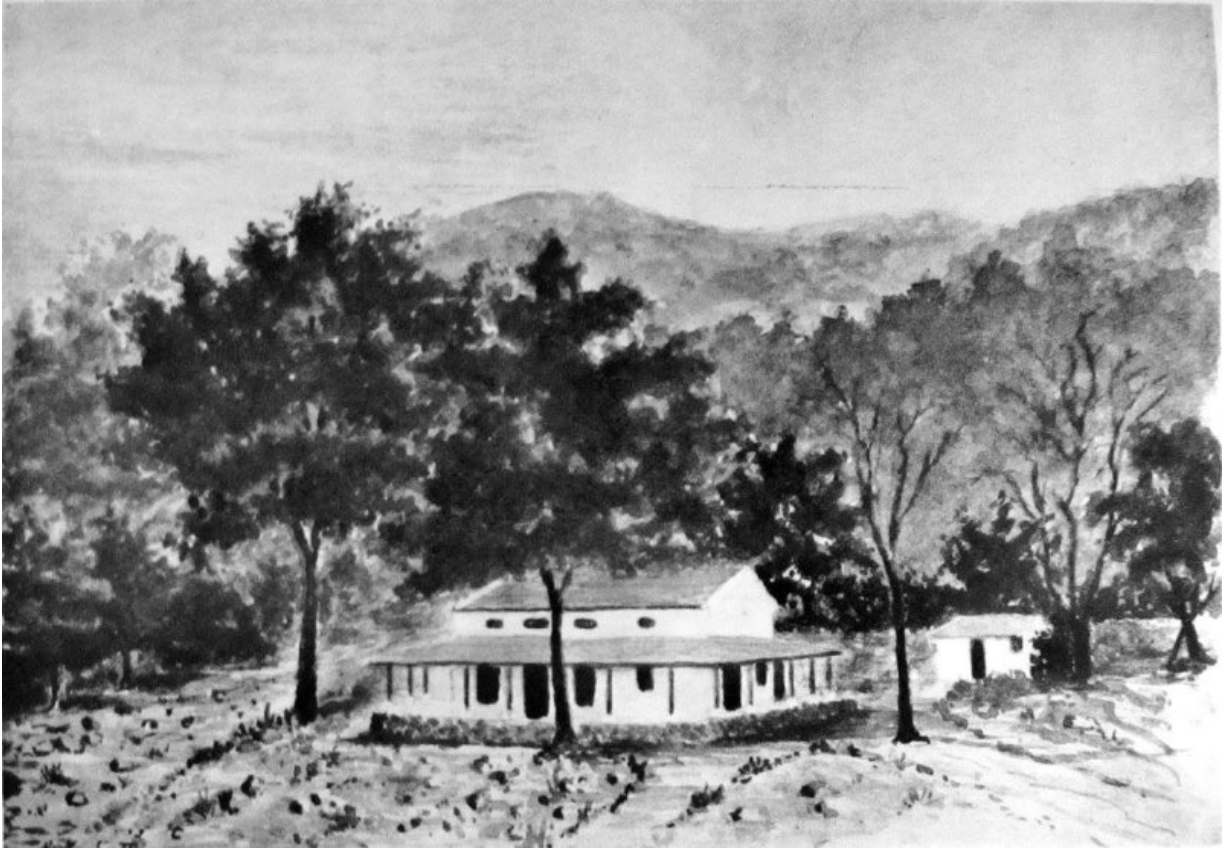
# JUNGLE LORE



*By*  
JIM CORBETT

*With an introduction by*  
MARTIN BOOTH

To Maggie



Our winter home at Kaladhungi

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## *Introduction*

**I**N THE SPRING OF 1985, I was sitting in a courtyard in Kaladhungi, Jim Corbett's village tucked against the first of the Himalayan foothills to rise from plains: around me was strewn the paraphernalia of the movie world. I was there for the filming of a drama documentary I had researched and written on the life of Jim Corbett, the culmination of years of keen ambition and a love and admiration for a man I never knew but who had, through his writings, fundamentally shaped my personal philosophy and attitude towards the natural world.

It was a fearfully hot day, even though early in the summer, and the film crew were hard at work arranging another set, in a local person's house, for the scene of Kunwar Singh's illness and Jim's saving of him from his opium addiction. Those not engaged in this work were squatting in the short shadows of late morning. I was with Frederick Treves, the actor playing Jim Corbett— and who looks remarkably like him, more so in costume and make-up— resting under the scant shade of some paw-paw trees, when one of the local staff on the film crew came up to us.

'Sir,' he announced to me, 'there is an old fellow come who wants to meet Carpet Sahib.' He pronounced Corbett as 'Carpet' as was the way in the Kumaon district.

I supposed the old fellow wanted to meet the actor— others had done so before him, drawn by the magnetism of the 'glamorous' movies— and so asked Freddie Treves if this would be in order. He, with the good grace of the generous man he is, agreed, although I know actors shun such public contact.

An incredibly old man appeared. He must have been in his eighties, wizened and bent almost double by age. He walked with a stick newly cut from a tree and weeping sticky sap. As soon as he saw Freddie, he bowed low and sought to press his forehead to the actor's feet.

I said to the crew member, foolishly assuming the old man to be perhaps a little senile, 'I think you'd better tell him this is only an actor.'

This information was translated and a gabble of Kumaoni dialect made in reply.

'I have told the old fellow,' the crewman reported, 'that this is an actor from England, but he refuses to believe this. It is, he says, a legend that Carpet Sahib will return one day and he believes this is the true Sahib come back.' Then, with obvious reverential astonishment, for the crewman was a city dweller from New Delhi, he added, 'This old fellow has walked one hundred kilometres to see Carpet Sahib. In just two days...'

Anyone who has seen the Kumaon foothills will know that twenty kilometres would be a feat for an average fit man yet this old sage had walked virtually non-stop for forty-eight hours on hearing over the jungle grapevine that Corbett was returned to his home. It was Carpet Sahib's magnetism, still vibrant over the forty years since his departure from India, which had drawn the old man and not the spurious trappings of movies and modernity. This is the reverence with which the Kumaoni people viewed Corbett, and still do. It is the veneration afforded to a sadhu, a saintly man who has earned his reputation by example: in Corbett's case, by the example he set in the jungles of northern India.

Corbett's famous stories of man-eating tigers and leopard hunting make such exciting reading one tends to overlook in them, in the heat of the chase retold with such simplicity of style and immediacy of effect, the minutiae of detail appertaining to the hunter's skill. And, sadly, his man-eater books tend to overshadow his other volumes, *My India* and *Jungle Lore*. In these are shown, to an even greater extent, not only the hunter but also the man Corbett was.

The former volume deals, as every Corbett reader knows, with the author's familiarity with and love of India, his home for all but the last eight years of his very long life. Here is revealed his immense knowledge of India in all her variety: although he never travelled to the south of the

subcontinent, he knew the north and centre well. Yet it is in this book, *Jungle lore*, that one sees the real soul of Corbett, the core of his love affair with the land of his birth— the jungles of the north and the people (in his mind, both human and animal folk) who inhabit it.

*Jungle Lore* is probably the least known of Corbett's books. It does not contain sustained anecdotes of hunting dangerous cats or in-depth stories of jungle or forest encounters. Instead, it deals quite simply— occasionally almost naïvely— with the close relationship between Corbett and the natural world and the immense value such an intimacy bears for all men. It is also the nearest he came to an autobiography.

Much of Corbett's childhood, as regards his experiences in the jungle, is here— his early forays with catapult and bow-and-arrow, his first gun and first adventures: but these are not presented as thrilling episodes (although they are) but as lessons attended in the jungle's classroom. For Corbett, term-time at the jungle school never ended and he never graduated, for it is impossible ever to do so: there is always more to learn, more to discover and more to observe because the jungle and the world of nature is in permanent flux.

The crux of *Jungle Lore*, however, is not restricted to learning and seeing. It is more to do with feeling, with sensibility and sensitivity— and it is here that Corbett stakes his claim to fame and posterity— and with presenting nature's case to a world fast ignoring the wonders of the animal (and plant) kingdoms. For, in *Jungle Lore*, written thirty-seven years ago, Jim Corbett is lamenting the divorce of modern man from his environment. He learns the lessons and, like all good teachers, he seeks to share his knowledge and the implications of it with others.

This book has not dated with the passing years. Its import is as vibrant today as ever it was, the morality even more seminal. Sadly, the morals Corbett espouses are still blatantly ignored. Much of Corbett's jungle has gone: the Siwalik Hills which he roamed are mostly denuded of trees, ravaged by erosion and mostly devoid of tigers and game. He would not recognize his Kumaon homeland now.



Yet pockets do remain. The reader can still wander a little way down the wooded firetrack to Powalgarh, still sit on the Boar River bridge, still see the wall Corbett and the villagers built around their fields to keep the wild pigs out of the crops— though the absence of these creatures has long since rendered that defence redundant.

Jungle Lore has a poignant and very pertinent message. It begs us to stop the disaster of raping the earth mother, entreats us to re-assert and re-affirm our contacts with the natural world, to get to know, understand and use to a mutual advantage the ways— the lore— of the wild.

MARTIN BOOTH

## Chapter One

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**F**OURTEEN OF US— BOYS AND girls ranging in age from eight to eighteen— were sitting on the wing wall of the old wooden cantilever bridge over the Boar river at Kaladhungi, listening to Dansay telling ghost stories. The bonfire we had made in the middle of the road, from brushwood collected in the nearby jungle, had burnt down to a red glow and with darkness closing down Dansay had selected just the right time and setting for his stories, as was evident from the urgent admonition of one of the nervous girls to her companion: ‘Oh don’t keep looking behind. You do make me feel so nervous.’

Dansay was an Irishman steeped to the crown of his head in every form of superstition, in which he had utter and complete belief, and it was therefore natural for him to tell his ghost stories in a very convincing manner. The stories he was telling that night related to shrouded figures and rattling bones, the mysterious opening and closing of doors, and the creaking of boards on stairways in old ancestral halls. As there was no possibility of my ever seeing a haunted ancestral hall, Dansay’s ghost stories held no terrors for me. He had just finished telling his most blood-curdling story and the nervous girl had again admonished her companion not to look behind, when the old horned fish owl who spent all his days dozing on the dead branch of a tree roofed over with creepers— where he was safe from the attention of crows and other birds that love to bait owls— started on his nightly quest for fish and frogs in the Boar river by giving vent to his deep-throated call of Ho Hat Ho from the topmost branch of the haldu tree that had been blasted by lightning and that was a landmark to those of us who, armed with catapult or butterfly net, ventured into the dense jungle in which it stood. The call of the owl, often mistaken by the ignorant for the call of a tiger, was answered by his mate who, except in the mating season, lived in a pipal tree on the bank of the canal, and was an excuse for Dansay to end his ghost stories and switch over to stories about banshees, which to him were even more real and more to be feared than ghosts. According to Dansay a banshee was an evil female spirit that

resided in dense forests and was so malignant that the mere hearing of it brought calamity to the hearer and his family, and the seeing of it death to the unfortunate beholder. Dansay described the call of a banshee as a long drawn-out scream, which was heard most frequently on dark and stormy nights. These banshee stories had a fearful fascination for me, for they had their setting in the jungles in which I loved to roam in search of birds and their eggs and butterflies.

I do not know what form the banshees took that Dansay heard in Ireland, but I know what form two of them took that he heard in the jungles at Kaladhungi. About one of these banshees I will tell you later, the other is known to all the people who live along the foothills of the Himalayas, and in many other parts of India, as a churail. The churail, the most feared of all evil spirits, appears in the form of a woman. Having cast her eyes on a human being this woman, whose feel are turned the wrong way, mesmerizes her victims, as a snake does a bird, and walking backwards lures them to their doom. When danger of seeing the woman threatens, the only defence against her wiles is to shield the eyes with the hands, any piece of cloth that is handy, or, if indoors, to pull a blanket over the head.

Whatever the human race may have been in the days of the cave man, we of the present day are essentially children of the daylight. In daylight we are in our element and the most timid among us can, if the necessity arises, summon the courage needed to face any situation, and we can even laugh and make light of the things that a few hours previously made our skin creep. When daylight fades and night engulfs us the sense of sight we depended on no longer sustains us and we are at the mercy of our imagination. Imagination at the best of times can play strange tricks, and when to imagination is added a firm belief in the supernatural it is not surprising that people surrounded by dense forests, whose only means of transport is their own feet, and whose field of vision at night is limited to the illumination provided by a pine torch, or a hand lantern when paraffin is available, should dread the hours of darkness.

Living among the people and for months on end speaking only their language, it was natural for Dansay to have superimposed their superstitions

on his own. Our hillmen do not lack courage, and Dansay was as brave as man could be; but because of their belief in the supernatural, I am convinced that neither the hillmen nor Dansay ever dreamed of investigating what the former called a churail and the latter believed was a banshee.

During all the years I have lived in Kumaon, and the many hundreds of nights I have spent in the jungles, I have heard the churail only three times — always at night— and I have seen it only once.

It was the month of March. A bumper mustard crop had just been harvested, and the village in the midst of which our cottage is situated was alive with happy sounds. Men and women were singing and children were calling to each other. The moon was a night or two from the full, and visibility was nearly as good as in daylight. Maggie and I were on the point of calling for dinner— the time was close on 8 p.m.— when clear and piercing on the night air came the call of the churail], and instantly every sound in the village was hushed. In the right-hand corner of the compound, and some fifty yards from our cottage, stands an old haldu tree. Generations of vultures, eagles, hawks, kites, crows, and glossy ibis, have worn the bark off and killed upper branches of the old tree. Opening our front door, which had been closed against the cold wind blowing down from the north, Maggie and I stepped out on to the veranda, and as we did so, the churail called again. The call came from the haldu tree and there, sitting on the topmost branch in brilliant moonlight was the maker of the call, the churail.

It is possible to describe some sounds by a combination of letters or of words, as for instance the ‘cooee’ of a human being, or the ‘tap, tap, tapping’ of a woodpecker, but no words of mine can describe the call of the churail. If I said it resembled the cry of a soul in torment, or of a human being in agony, it would convey no meaning to you, for neither you nor I have heard either of these sounds. Nor can I liken the call to any other sounds heard in the jungles, for it is something apart, something that does not appear to have any connexion with our world and that has the effect of curdling the hearer’s blood and arresting his heart-beats. On the previous occasions on which I had heard the call I knew it emanated from a bird and

I suspected the bird to be an owl, possibly a migrant, for I know every bird in Kumaon and its call, and this was no bird of our jungles. Stepping back into the room I returned with a pair of field-glasses which had been used during the Kaiser's war for spotting for artillery and which were therefore as good as glasses could be. With these I examined the bird very carefully. I will describe what I saw in the hope that someone, more knowledgeable than myself, will be able to identify it.

- (a) In size the bird was a little smaller than a golden eagle.
- (b) It stood upright on its rather long legs.
- (c) Its tail was short, but not as short as an owl's tail.
- (d) Its head was not round and big like the head of an owl, nor did it have a short neck.
- (e) On its head there was no crest or 'horns'.
- (f) When it called— which it did at regular intervals of about half a minute— it put its head up facing the heavens, and opened its beak wide.
- (g) In colour it was an overall black, or possibly a dark brown which looked black by moonlight.

I had a 28-bore shot gun, and a light rifle in the gun rack. The gun was useless, for the bird was out of range of it, and I was frightened to use the rifle. Accuracy of aim cannot be depended on in moonlight, and if I missed the bird everyone within hearing distance would be more convinced than ever that the call was being made by an evil spirit which even a rifle bullet was of no avail. After calling about twenty times the bird spread its wings, and gliding off the tree, vanished into the night.

The village sounds were not resumed, and next day no references was made to the churail. 'When in the jungles,' warned my poacher friend Kunwar Singh when I was a small boy, 'never speak of a tiger by its name, for if you do, the tiger is sure to appear.' For the same reason the people of our foothills never talk of the churail.

The younger members of the two large families who spent the winter months in Kaladhungi numbered fourteen, excluding my younger brother who was too small to take part in the nightly bonfire or to bathe in the river, and who therefore did not count. Of these fourteen, seven were girls, ranging in age from nine to eighteen, and seven were boys, ranging in age from eight to eighteen, of whom I was the youngest. This handicap, of being the youngest of the males, saddled me with tasks that I disliked intensely, for we were living in the Victorian age and when, for instance, the girls went bathing in the canal that formed one boundary of our estate, which they did every day except Sunday— why girls should not bathe on Sunday I do not know— it was deemed necessary for them to be accompanied by a male whose age would offer no offence to Mother Grundy. The selected victim being myself, it was my duty to carry the towels and nightdresses of the girls— for there were no swim-suits in those days— and to keep guard while the girls were bathing and warn them of the approach of males, for there was a footpath on the opposite bank of the canal which was occasionally used by men on their way to collect firewood in the jungles, or to work on the canal when it needed repair or cleaning. The canal was a masonry one, ten feet wide and three feet deep, and where there was an inlet for irrigating our garden the King of Kumaon, General Sir Henry Ramsay, had had the bed of the canal scooped out for a few yards to a depth of six feet, and every day before I set out with the girls I was cautioned not to allow any of them to get drowned in this deep part. The entering of running water while wearing a thin cotton nightdress is a difficult feat, if the proprieties are to be maintained, for if the unwary step into three feet of water and sit down— as all girls appear to want to do the moment they get into the water— the nightdress rises up and flows over the head, to the consternation of all beholders. When this happened, as it very frequently did, I was under strict orders to look the other way.

While I was guarding the girls, and looking the other way when the necessity arose, the other boys armed with catapults and fishing-rods were making their way up the canal bank to the deep pool at the head of the canal, competing as they went as to who could shoot down the highest flower off the *samal* trees they passed, or put the first pellet into the *figus* tree on the canal bank, a hit only being allowed when the milk-like sap—

the best medium for the making of birdlime— trickled down the bole of the tree. And there were birds to be fired at, hair-crested drongos, golden orioles, and rosy pastors that drink the nectar of the *samal* flowers; common, slaty, and rose-headed paroquets that nipped off the *samal* flowers and, after nibbling a small portion, dropped the flowers to the ground for deer and pigs to eat; crested pied kingfishers who when disturbed went skimming up the canal, and always the horned owl— the mate of the one who lived on the far side of the Boar bridge— whose perch was on a branch of the pipal tree overhanging the canal, and who had never been known to let anyone get within catapult range but who nevertheless was always fired at. Arrived at the big pool there would be fierce competition to see who could land the most fish on improvised tackle of thread borrowed from their respective mother's or sister's work baskets, bent pins for those who could not afford the regulation hook, and rods made from the side-shoots of bamboos. The fishing ended when the supply of paste, used as bait, was exhausted or had been dropped by a careless hand into the water, and with a catch of a few small mahseer— for our rivers were full of fish— clothes were hastily discarded and all lined up on the big rock overhanging the pool and, at a signal, dived off to see who could reach the far bank first. And while the others were indulging in these fascinating sports I, a mile lower down the canal, was being told to look the other way or being reprimanded for not having given warning of the approach of the old villager who had passed carrying a load of wood on his head. One advantage I derived from my enforced labour, it let me into all the secret plans the girls made for the playing of practical jokes on the boy members of the two families in general, and on Dansay and Neil Fleming in particular.

Dansay and Neil were both mad Irishmen, and here their similarity ended, for while Dansay was short, hairy, and as strong as a grizzly bear, Neil was tall and willowy and as fair as a lily. The difference even went deeper, for whereas Dansay would think nothing of shouldering his muzzle-loading rifle and stalking and shooting tigers on foot, Neil had a horror of the jungles and had never been known to fire a gun. One thing they had in common, hatred of each other, for both were madly in love with all the girls. Dansay— who had been disinherited by his father, a General, for refusing to go into the Army— had been at a Public School with my elder

brothers and was at that time resting between the job he had lost in the Forest Service and the one he hoped some day to get in the Political Service. Neil on the other hand was a working man, assistant to my brother Tom in the Postal Service; and the fact that neither was in a position to dream of matrimony in no way damped their affection for the girls or lessened their jealousy of each other.

From conversations overheard on the canal bank I learned that friend Neil on his last visit to Kaladhungi had been too full of himself and was beginning to imagine things, whereas Dansay on the other hand was too subdued and very slow in coming forward. To rectify this unsatisfactory state of affairs it was thought necessary to pull Neil down a whole row of pegs, and elevate Dansay a little: 'Not too much, my dear, or he will then begin to imagine things.' What 'imagining things' meant I did not know, and I thought it best not to ask. To accomplish these desired ends, with one stroke if possible, it would be necessary to include both the too ardent Neil, and the too slow Dan in the same practical joke. Many plans were discussed and the one eventually agreed on needed the co-operation of brother Tom. Work during the winter months was not heavy in Naini Tal and Tom was in the habit of allowing Neil to absent himself every alternate week from Saturday evening to Monday morning. This brief holiday Neil spent with one or other of the two families in Kaladhungi, in both of which he was welcome for his genial nature and his grand voice. Accordingly a letter was sent to Tom asking him to detain Neil on one pretext or another on the coming Saturday evening, and to send him off on his fifteen-mile walk to Kaladhungi so as to arrive at the end of his journey as night was falling. Further, Tom was to hint to Neil that the girls would probably get alarmed at his late arrival and would walk up the road to meet him. The plan that had been agreed on for this, the greatest of all practical jokes, was that Dansay, sewn up in one of his bear skins, was to be conducted by the girls two miles up the Naini Tal road to where there was a sharp bend on the road. At this point Dansay was to take up position behind a rock and, when Neil arrived, roar at him in a bear-like manner. Neil, on seeing the bear, was expected to dash down the road into the arms of the waiting girls who, on hearing his story, would pass uncomplimentary remarks on his bravery, and scream with laughter in which Dansay would join when he arrived on the



scene a minute later. Dansay raised objections, which he withdrew when he was told that the strip of red flannel he had found in his ham sandwich, and which had caused him a lot of embarrassment at a picnic two weeks previously, had been inserted at Neil's suggestion.

Traffic on the Kaladhungi-Naini Tal road ceased at sundown and on the appointed evening Dansay, sewn into one of his bear skins, was led by the girls, at times on all fours and at times on his flat feet, to the pre-arranged spot where— the evening being warm and the skin having been sewn over his clothes— he arrived in a bath of sweat. In the meantime up in Naini Tal Neil was chafing at being given one job after another until the time had passed when he usually started on his walk to Kaladhungi. Eventually he was told that he could go, and before he left, Tom produced his shot gun and putting two cartridges into it placed it in Neil's hands and warned him that it was only to be used in emergency. The road from Naini Tal to Kaladhungi is downhill most of the way and for the first eight miles passes through patches of cultivation; thereafter, and right clown to Kaladhungi, it runs through more or less dense forest. Dansay and the girls had been in their respective positions for some time, and the light was beginning to fade, when down the road came Neil singing 'Killarney' at the top of his voice, to keep his courage up. The singing came nearer and nearer— the girls said later that they had never heard Neil in better voice— and then round the bend where Dansay was waiting for him came Neil. Acting on instructions, Dansay stood up on his hind legs and roared at Neil in a bear-like manner, and Neil *threw up his gun and fired off both barrels*. A cloud of smoke obscured Neil's vision and as he started to run away he heard the 'bear' go rolling down the hill out of sight. At that moment the girls came running up the road, and at the sight of them, Neil brandished his gun and said he had just shot a huge bear that had made a furious attack upon him. Asked by the horrified girls what had become of the bear Neil pointed down the hill and invited the girls to accompany him to have a look at his bag, adding that it would be quite safe to do so for he had shot the bear dead. Declining the invitation the girls told Neil to go down alone and nothing loth Neil— who was greatly touched by the tears of the girls which he thought were being shed at his narrow escape from the bear— went down the hill. What Dansay said to Neil and what Neil said to Dansay is not on

record; but when, after a long interval, they scrambled up to the road—where the girls were anxiously waiting— Dansay was carrying the gun, and Neil was carrying the bear's skin. Dansay, who in his roll down the steep hillside had been saved from injury by the bear's skin, asserted that Neil had shot him in the chest and knocked him off his feet. And when Neil explained how he came into possession of the gun, which had so nearly caused a fatal accident, the blame for the miscarriage of the whole enterprise was heaped on brother Tom's absent head.

Monday was a government holiday and when Tom arrived on Sunday night to spend the holiday at home, he was confronted by a bevy of angry girls who demanded to know what he meant by entrusting a man like Neil with a loaded gun and thereby endangering the life of Dansay. Tom listened while the storm broke over his head, and when the narrator got to the part where Dansay had been shot in the chest and knocked off his feet and the girls had wept in each other's arms at his untimely death, Tom scandalized all present by bursting into peals of laughter, in which all but Dansay joined when he explained that suspecting— from the letter he had received— that mischief was on foot he had extracted the bullets from the cartridges, and loaded them with flour. So the net result of the great practical joke was not what had been expected, for Neil got more full of himself, while Dansay got more subdued.



## Chapter Two

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OWING TO MY ASSOCIATION WITH the girls Dansay suspected me, quite wrongly, of having had a hand in the bear incident out of which he had not come with as much credit to himself as had been expected, for the only contribution I had made was to suggest that strong twine be used to sew him into the bear's skin instead of thread. To no other reason can I ascribe his invitation to me one morning— while I was showing my companions how to swing from one branch of a tree to another — to accompany him on a shoot. Uplifted to the seventh heaven at having been selected for this great honour I set out with Dansay who— after we had started— said he would show me how to shoot a tiger on foot. At the Dhunigar canebrakes— the home of tigers as I found in subsequent years— we saw many pug marks but no tigers, and on the way home Dansay, who was a friend of the family, decided to give me my first lesson in firing a gun. At the time he came to this decision we were standing at one end of an open glade, at the other end of which a number of white-capped laughing thrushes were turning up the dead leaves in search of white ants. While we had been after the tigers Dansay had carried his muzzle-loading rifle in his hands and his shotgun— also a muzzle-loader— slung over his shoulder. He now unslung the shotgun and placing it in my hands pointed to the thrushes and instructed me to put my left foot a little in advance of the right, raise the gun to my shoulder, hold it steady, and gently press the trigger, all of which I did. Even after this long lapse of years I am not sure in my mind whether the gun had been specially loaded for my benefit or whether Dansay who, as I have told you, was as strong as a grizzly bear, was in the habit of over-charging his gun. Anyway, when I recovered sufficiently to pick myself up and take an interest in my surroundings I saw Dansay running his hands along the barrels of the gun to see if they had got dented on the stones on to which I flung the gun as I went heels over head on pressing the trigger. The thrushes had all gone but on the ground on which they had been feeding we found a white-browed flycatcher, a bird about the size of a robin. On examining the little bird we found no signs of injury and

Dansay concluded it had died of shock, a conclusion with which I was in entire agreement, for I too had nearly died of shock.

Shortly after my experience with Dansay's muzzle-loader my eldest brother Tom who, on the death of my father when I was four years of age, had taken over the responsibilities of the family, announced one evening that he was going to take me out bear shooting. The announcement was received with consternation by my mother who, though she had the courage of Joan of Arc and Nurse Cavell combined, was as gentle and as timid as a dove. I listened interestedly while Tom— on whom I lavished all of a small boy's hero worship— assured my mother that there was no danger, that he would take great care of me, and that I would come to no harm. When my mother eventually gave her consent to my going bear shooting I determined I would keep out of harm's way by sticking to brother Tom's heels like glue.

We proceeded that evening— Tom carrying both his own rifle and a gun for me— along a game track that ran across the face of a great mountain. Half-way across the mountain we came to a deep, dark, and evil-looking ravine. Tom stopped at the edge of the ravine and whispered to me that it was a grand place for bears, who either went up or down the ravine or came along the game track. He then pointed to a rock on the side of the track for me to sit on, put the gun and two ball cartridges into my hands, and warned me to be very careful to kill and not wound any bears I fired at. Then, pointing to a solitary oak tree on the shoulder of the mountain eight hundred yards away, he said he was going there and that if during the course of the evening I saw a bear anywhere in his vicinity and in a position in which I thought he could not see it, I was to go and tell him, and with these parting words Tom left me.

A wind was blowing, rustling the dry grass and dead leaves, and my imagination filled the jungle round me with hungry bears. (During that winter nine bears were shot on that mountain.) That I would presently be eaten I had no doubt whatever, and I was quite sure the meal would prove a very painful one for me. Time dragged on leaden feet, each moment adding to my terror, and when the glow from the setting sun was bathing the

mountain side in red, I saw a bear slowly making its way along the skyline a few hundred yards above Tom's tree. Whether Tom had seen the bear or not mattered no jot to me. The opportunity I had been praying for to get away from that terrifying spot had come, and I was going while the going was still good. So, shouldering the gun, which after my experience with Dansay's muzzle-loader I had been too frightened to load, I set off to tell Tom about the bear and to reattach myself to him.

The Himalayan black bear, in our part of the world, live throughout the winter on acorns. Bears are heavy and acorns grow at the extremities of oak branches, and in order to get at the acorns bears bend the branches inwards towards the centre of the tree. Some of these branches are only cracked and remain green for years, others are torn right off and fall to the ground when released, while others again are left dangling by a strand of bark. I had crossed the ravine and entered a dense patch of undergrowth when I heard a rushing sound. Petrified, I stood quite still while the sound grew louder and louder, and then with a crash a big object fell right in front of me. It was only a branch which a bear had left dangling on the tree under which I was passing, and which the wind had dislodged, but had it been the biggest bear in Asia it could not have frightened me more. The courage I had summoned to take me to brother Tom had all gone, so back to my rock I crept. If a human being in normal health can die of fear, I would have died that night and many times since.

The red glow had faded off the mountain and the light gone out of the sky, when a figure loomed out of the darkness and a cheery voice hailed me, 'You have not been feeling frightened, have you?' Tom asked as he took my gun, and when I said I was not feeling frightened now, Tom left it at that, for he was a wise and a very understanding brother.

Tom was a great believer in making an early start when he went shooting, and the morning he took me with him to shoot peafowl he roused me at 4 a.m., made me wash and dress as silently as possible in order not to disturb the rest of the family and, half an hour later, with a hot cup of tea and home-made biscuits to sustain us, we set out in the dark on our seven-mile walk to Garuppu.

In my lifetime I have seen great changes in the forests of the Tarai and Bhabar. Some of these changes have resulted from exploitation, others have been brought about in a natural manner. In some areas where there were dense virgin forests there is now scrub jungle, and where there were wide open stretches of grass and plum bushes there is now forest. To the south east of Garuppu where there is now tree jungle, there was (at the time I am writing about), waist-high grass and plum bushes. It was this area that Tom was making for on that December morning, for the plums were ripe and were an irresistible attraction, not only to deer and pigs but also to peafowl.

It was still dark when we arrived at Garuppu so we sat near the well while light gradually appeared in the east, listening to the jungle awakening. On all sides red jungle-cocks were crowing, arousing from their slumbers a multitude of smaller birds each of which, as it shook the dew from its feathers and the sleep out of its eyes, joined the cocks in heralding the new-born day. Presently the peafowl, who were roosting on the giantsamal trees, scattered over the wide grass area, added their piercing call to the growing volume of jungle sounds, and when the rising sun touched the topmost branches of a *samal* tree within our view, the twenty or more peafowl that were clustered on the widespreading branches flew down among the plum bushes. Getting to his feet Tom knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and said it was time for us to enter the jungle. The dew in this low-lying area rises to a height of about thirty feet, and when going through tree jungle in the early morning the moisture dripping from the leaves resembles both in sound and in volume a shower of rain. The grass, waist-high for Tom and chin-high for me, into which we stepped from the road was saturated with dew and we had only gone a few yards into it when my clothes were clinging to me, and adding to the discomfort of wet clothes the morning was bitterly cold.

Going in the direction of the *samal* tree we put up ten or a dozen peafowl all of which, with one exception, flew low for some distance and resettled in the grass. The exception, a peacock in full plumage, rose at a steep angle and alighted on a branch of the *samal* tree. Tom now filled me with delight by putting his 12-bore breach-loading hammer gun into my hands, and telling me to go forward and shoot the peacock. I had a distance of a hundred and fifty yards to go and when I had covered forty yards I stopped,

and as I was trying to cock the gun I heard a low whistle and on looking round saw Tom beckoning to me. On my rejoining him he said I was out of range where I had stopped, and when I told him I had not stopped to fire the gun, but to cock it, he said I must never cock a gun until I was ready to fire for it was dangerous anywhere to carry a cocked gun and most of all in grass where one was liable to trip up or stumble into unseen holes. 'Now,' he said, 'go forward and have another try.' On this second occasion—taking advantage of a big plum bush—I crept up to within easy range. The *samal* tree was leafless but was covered with big red flowers, and sitting on a branch on my side of the tree, with the slanting rays of the sun shining on it, was the most beautiful peacock I had ever seen. The time had now come to cock the gun but what with excitement and my frozen fingers I found it impossible to draw back the hammers, and while I was wondering what to do next the peacock flew away. 'Never mind,' Tom said when he came up to me. 'You will have better luck next time.' But no more birds obliged me by flying into trees that morning, and after Tom had shot a red jungle-cock and three peafowl we left the grass and plum jungle and regaining the road made for home and a late breakfast.



## *Chapter Three*

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WITH THE THREE LESSONS I have detailed, my jungle training—as far as my elders were concerned— was over. I had been shown how to handle and to fire a gun, and I had been taken into jungles in which there were tigers and bears with the object, I believe, of showing me that no danger was to be apprehended from unwounded animals. Lessons well learnt when young are never afterwards forgotten, and I had learnt my lessons well. Whether or not from now onwards I took advantage of these lessons to interest myself in any form of field sport was entirely my own concern, and I am glad it was so. I am glad the decision was left with me and that I was not told I must do this or must do that not because of any desire on my part, but because my elders considered it was the right thing for a boy of my age to do.

Boys are not lacking in intelligence, and where facilities for field sports exist— as they do in most parts of India— they should not be deprived of the pleasure of selecting the form of sport that most appeals to them and for which they are physically fitted, or of eschewing field sports altogether if they have no interest in them and are averse to taking life. Compulsion— no matter how well veiled— even though it follows the lines of an individual's inclinations, takes, in my opinion, all the joy out of any form of sport.

Tom helped my mother and my sisters to nurse me through a life-and-death struggle with pneumonia, and when an incentive was needed to make me take an interest in the life that had so nearly slipped through my fingers, he gave me my first catapult. Sitting on my bed Tom produced the catapult from his pocket, and putting it into my hands, took a cup of beef juice off the bed-side table and told me I must drink it in order to get strong enough to use the catapult. Thereafter I took without protest all that was offered me, and as I regained strength Tom assisted the other members of the family to keep my interest alive by telling me about the jungles and instructing me in the use of my catapult.



From Tom I learned that the year— for sportsmen— was divided into two seasons, a close season and an open season. During the close season my catapult would have to be put away, for at this time birds were nesting and it was cruel to kill them while they were sitting on their eggs or caring for their young. During the open season I could use my catapult freely to kill birds, provided I made use of every bird I killed. Green pigeons and blue rockpigeons, which abounded in our hills, could be shot to eat, but all other birds would have to be skinned and set up and for this purpose, when the time came, Tom provided me with a skinning knife and a pot of arsenical soap. Tom did not include taxidermy among his many accomplishments, however, but his demonstration with a cock *kalege* pheasant as subject gave me a general idea of how to remove a bird's skin, and practice later made me perfect. A cousin of ours, Stephen Dease, was at that time compiling a book of the birds of Kumaon and most of the four hundred and eighty coloured illustrations in his book were made from birds in my collection, or from specimens I specially collected for him.

Tom had two dogs: Poppy, a red pi dog which he found starving in the streets of Kabul during the second Afghan war and which he brought back to India with him; and Magog, a liver and white spaniel with a great plume of a tail. Poppy had no use for small boys, but Magog— who was strong enough to carry me for short distances— was more liberal minded and in addition to constituting himself my protector, lavished all his affection on me. It was Magog who taught me it was unwise to pass close to dense cover in which animals who were sleeping might resent being disturbed, and it was he who showed me that a dog can learn to walk as noiselessly through a jungle as a cat. With Magog to give me confidence I penetrated deep into the jungles where previously I had been afraid to go, and during the catapult days we met with one exciting experience which nearly cost Magog his life.

We were out that morning trying to get a scarlet sun-bird for my collection when Dansay, out for a walk with his Scottie called Thistle, joined us. The two dogs were not good friends, but they refrained from fighting and after we had proceeded a short distance together Thistle put up a porcupine and Magog, disregarding my urgent call to him, joined in the chase. Dansay was armed with his muzzle-loading shotgun but was afraid

to use it for fear of hitting the dogs which were running one on either side of the porcupine and biting at it. Running was not Dansay's strong point and, further, he was hampered with his gun so it was not long before the porcupine, the two dogs, and I, had left him far behind. Porcupines are very unpleasant animals to deal with, for though they cannot project or 'shoot' their quills they are tough and very agile on their feet, and their method of defence, or attack, is to erect their quills and run backwards.

Before joining in the chase I had stuffed my catapult into my pocket and armed myself with a stout stick, but I was able to do little to help the dogs, for every time I got near the porcupine it ran at me and I was several times saved by the dogs from being impaled on its quills. When the chase had covered half a mile and we were approaching a deep ravine in which there were porcupine burrows, Magog got the porcupine by the nose and Thistle got hold of its throat. Dansay arrived when the fight was practically over, and, for good measure, he put a charge of shot into the porcupine. Both dogs were streaming with blood, and after we had pulled from them all the quills we could we hurried home— Dansay carrying the porcupine slung over his shoulder— to try to pull out with pincers the quills that had broken off short and resisted all our attempts to pull them out with our fingers, for porcupine quills are barbed and difficult to extract.

Magog passed a very restless day and night sneezing frequently and, each time he did so, leaving a big clot of blood on the straw on which he was lying. The following day was fortunately a Sunday and when Tom arrived from Naini Tal to spend the day at home, he found that a quill had broken off short inside Magog's nose. After many fruitless attempts Tom eventually got hold of the broken end with the pincers and extracted a six-inch length of quill, of the thickness of the quills that are used for the making of penholders. Blood spurted out after the quill had been removed, and as we had no means of stopping the flow Magog's life was despaired of. However, with careful nursing and feeding he recovered, as did also Thistle who had not come as badly out of the fight with the porcupine as Magog had done. After I had been given the muzzle-loading gun, about which I shall tell you later, Magog and I met with two exciting experiences, one at Kaladhungi and the other at Naini Tal. Naya Gaon village, which I

have mentioned elsewhere, was at that time fully cultivated and between the cultivation and the Dhunigar stream there was a strip of jungle, intercepted with open glades. Through this strip of jungle which was from a quarter to half a mile wide runs a game track parallel to, and midway between, the cultivation and the stream. The jungles on both sides of the stream were teeming with game in the way of red jungle-fowl, peafowl, deer, and pig, that took heavy toll of the crops and that crossed the game track on their way to or from the fields. It was on this game track that Magog and I met with our first experience.

Naya Gaon is three miles from our home at Kaladhungi and at crack of dawn one morning Magog and I set out to try to bag a peafowl. Keeping to the middle of the wide road, for the light was not good and the jungle through which the road ran was the haunt of leopards and tigers, we arrived at the point where the game track met the road just as the sun was rising. Here I proceeded to load the gun, a long business, for first the powder had to be measured and poured down the barrel and a thick felt wad firmly rammed down on it. The shot then had to be measured and poured down on to the felt wad and a thin cardboard wad rammed down on the shot. When the ramrod bounced off the charge in the barrel, the gun was considered to be well and truly loaded. The big cumbersome hammer was then put at half-cock and a percussion cap firmly fixed on the nipple. When these several items had been performed to my satisfaction I stowed away the loading materials in my haversack, and Magog and I set off on the game track. A number of jungle-fowl and several peafowl crossed the track in front of us but none of them stood to give me a shot, and we had proceeded for about half a mile when we came to an open glade and as we stepped out on it seven peafowl, in single file, crossed its further end. Waiting for a few moments we crept forward to where the peafowl had crossed, and I then sent in Magog to put them up.

Peafowl when put up by a dog in thick jungle invariably settle on the branches of trees, and as I was at the stage when even a sitting bird was difficult to shoot, it took Magog's and my combined efforts to bring a peafowl to bag. Magog loved peafowl above all other game, and after

treeing the birds he invariably dashed round barking at them, and while he engaged their attention I crept up to do my part.

The seven peafowl after crossing the glade had evidently taken to their legs, for Magog had gone at least a hundred yards into the dense scrub and tree jungle before I heard a flutter of wings and the squark of the peafowl, followed immediately afterwards by a frightened yelp from Magog and the angry roar of a tiger. The peafowl had quite evidently led Magog on to a sleeping tiger, and birds, dog, and tiger, were each expressing their surprise, fear, and resentment, in their own particular way. Magog after his first yelp of fear was barking furiously and running, and the tiger was emitting roar upon roar and chasing him, and both were coming towards me. In the general confusion a peacock— giving its alarm call— came sailing through the trees and alighted on a branch just above my head, but for the time being I had lost all interest in birds and my one and only desire was to go somewhere, far away, where there were no tigers. Magog had four legs to carry him over the ground whereas I only had two, so without any feeling of shame— for deserting a faithful companion— I picked up my feet and ran as I had never run before. Magog soon overtook me and the roaring behind us ceased.

I can picture the tiger now, though I could not do so at the time, sitting down on his haunches on reaching the open glade and laughing, a tiger's laugh, at the sight of a big dog and a small boy running for what they thought was dear life, while all that he was doing was to shoo away a dog that had disturbed his slumbers.

I met with one more experience that winter before we left Kaladhungi for our summer home in Naini Tal and on that occasion I was alone, for Magog had taken french leave to visit a lady friend in the village and was absent when I started. I had been avoiding dense jungle for some time and keeping to more open stretches, and on this particular morning I was looking for jungle-fowl near the Garuppu road below Naya Gaon. Many birds were scratching about on the road but none of them let me get close enough for a shot, so I left the road and entered the jungle which here consisted of trees, a few scattered bushes, and short grass. Before leaving the road I removed

my shoes and stockings, and I had only proceeded a short distance when I caught sight of a red jungle-cock scratching up the dead leaves under a tree.

When a jungle-fowl, or a farmyard chicken, scratches up in the one case dead leaves and in the other litter, it holds its head high when looking round for danger and if there is no danger near it lowers its head to feed on the exposed insects or corn. The cock that was feeding under the tree was out of range so I started on my bare feet to stalk it. Gaining a yard or two each time the cock lowered his head and freezing each time he raised it, I had nearly got within shooting range when I came on a shallow depression. One step into the depression—which was masked on both sides with knee-high grass—and two steps on the far side and I would be in range, and would in addition have a small tree against which to rest the heavy gun and take careful aim. So waiting until the cock again lowered his head I stepped into the depression, and put my bare foot on the coils of a big python. A few days previously I had run as no boy had ever run, and I now jumped as no boy had ever jumped, and as I landed on the far side of the depression I whipped round and fired into the writhing mass and ran until I regained the safety of the road.

In all the years I have spent in the jungles of Northern India I have never heard of a python killing a human being; even so, I know I had a very lucky escape that morning, for if the python had caught me by the leg, as it would undoubtedly have done if it had not been asleep, there would have been no necessity for it to kill me, for I should have died of fright, as a full-grown *cheetal* hind died near my tent one night when a python caught it by the tail. How big the python was that I stepped on, and whether I killed it or not, I do not know for I never went back to look. In that same area I have seen python eighteen feet in length, and I have seen one that had swallowed a *cheetal* and another that had swallowed a kakar.

Magog and I met with our second experience shortly after we returned to Naini Tal from Kaladhungi. The forests round Naini Tal at that time teemed with *kalege* pheasants and game of all kinds, and as there were few sportsmen and no restrictions with regard to shooting areas it was possible

for Magog and me to go out in the evening after school hours and bag a brace of pheasants or hill-partridge for the larder.

One evening Magog and I walked down the Kaladhungi road and though Magog put up several pheasants, none of them remained seated on a tree long enough to give me a shot. At Sarya Tal, the little lake nestling at the foot of the valley, we left the road and entered the jungle with the object of working back to the gorge at the upper end of the valley. Near the lake I shot a pheasant, and going through dense brushwood and over great piles of rocks we had got back to within two hundred yards of the road when, on emerging from some thick cover on to an open grassy glade, we saw several pheasants jumping up from a bed of wild balsam to eat the berries off a low bush. The birds were only visible while they were in the air, and as I had not reached the stage when I could hit a moving target I sat down on the ground, with Magog lying alongside, to wait for one of the birds to come out on to the glade.

We had been in position for some time and the birds were still jumping up to reach the berries when on the road—which ran diagonally across the face of the hill—we heard a number of men talking and laughing. From the rattling of their tin cans I knew they were milkmen who had been up to Naini Tal to sell milk and were now on their way home to their villages below Sarya Tal. I first heard the men when they turned a corner in road four hundred yards away, and they had reached a point above and a little to our left front when they all shouted together as though they were driving some animal off the road. Next minute, in the jungle immediately above us, we heard some big animal coming in our direction. The undergrowth was too dense for me to see what the animal was until it dashed into the bed of balsam and put up the pheasants, which went skimming over our heads: then out on to the open glade bounded a big leopard. The leopard saw us while he was still in the air, and as he touched the ground he lay flat and froze in that position. The glade sloped upwards at an angle of thirty degrees, and as the leopard was above and some ten yards from us every inch of him from his chin to the tip of his tail was visible. As the leopard appeared I released my left hand from the gun and placed it on Magog's

neck and I could now feel tremors running through him, as I could feel them running through myself.

This was the first leopard that Magog and I had ever seen, and as the wind was blowing up the hill I believe our reactions to it were much the same— intense excitement, but no feeling of fear. This absence of fear I can now, after a lifetime's experience, attribute to the fact that the leopard had no evil intentions towards us. Driven off the road by the men, he was quite possibly making for the mass of rocks over which Magog and I had recently come, and on clearing the bushes and finding a boy and a dog directly in his line of retreat he had frozen, to take stock of the situation. A glance at us was sufficient to satisfy him that we had no hostile intentions towards him, for a leopard can size up a situation more quickly than any other animal in our jungles. And now, satisfied from our whole attitude that he had nothing to fear from us, and satisfied also that there were no other human beings in the direction that he wanted to go, he leapt from his crouching position and in a few graceful bounds disappeared into the jungle behind us. The wind blowing from this direction carried the scent of the leopard to Magog and in a second he was on his feet growling fiercely and with all the hair on his neck and back on end. Only now he realized that the beautiful animal he had watched without any feeling of fear and that could have killed him, big as he was, without any difficulty, had been a leopard, his most deadly and most feared enemy in all the jungles.



## *Chapter Four*

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**B**ETWEEN THE CATAPULT AND THE muzzle-loader periods there was a bow-and-arrow interlude which I look back on with very great pleasure, for though I never succeeded in impaling bird or beast with an arrow I opened my credit account— with my small savings— with the bank of Nature during that period, and the Jungle Lore I absorbed during the interlude, and later, has been a never-ending source of pleasure to me.

I have used the word ‘absorbed’, in preference to ‘learnt’, for jungle lore is not a science that can be learnt from textbooks; it can, however, be absorbed, a little at a time, and the absorption process can go on indefinitely, for the book of nature has no beginning, as it has no end. Open the book where you will, and at any period of your life, and if you have the desire to acquire knowledge you will find it of intense interest, and no matter how long or how intently you study the pages your interest will not flag, for in nature there is no finality.

Today it is spring, and the tree before you is bedecked with gay bloom. Attracted by this bloom a multitude of birds of many colours are flitting from branch to branch, some drinking the nectar from the flowers, others eating the petals, and others again feeding on the bees that are busily collecting honey. Tomorrow the bloom will have given place to fruit and a different multitude of birds will be in possession of the tree. And each member of the different multitudes has its allotted place in the scheme of nature. One to beautify nature’s garden, another to fill it with melody, and yet another to regenerate the garden.

Season after season, year after year, the scene changes. A new generation of birds in varying numbers and species adorn the tree. The tree loses a limb — torn off in a storm— gets stackheaded and dies, and another tree takes its place; and so the cycle goes on.



On the path at your feet is the track of a snake that passed that way an hour before sunrise. The snake was going from the right-hand side of the path to the left, was three inches in girth, and you can be reasonably certain that it was of a poisonous variety. Tomorrow the track on the same path, or on another, may show that the snake that crossed it five minutes earlier was travelling from left to right, that it was five inches in girth, and that it was non-poisonous.

And so the knowledge you absorb today will be added to the knowledge you will absorb tomorrow, and on your capacity for absorption, not on any fixed standard, will depend the amount of knowledge you ultimately accumulate. And at the end of the accumulating period— be that period one year or fifty— you will find that you are only at the beginning, and that the whole field of nature lies before you waiting to be explored and to be absorbed. But be assured that if you are not interested or if you have no desire to acquire knowledge, you will learn nothing from nature.

I walked with a companion for twelve miles through a beautiful forest from one camp to another. It was the month of April and nature was at her best. Trees, shrubs, and creepers were in full bloom. Gaily coloured butterflies flitted from flower to flower, and the air, filled with the scent of the flowers, throbbed with the song of birds. At the end of the day my companion was asked if he had enjoyed the walk, and he answered, 'No. The road was very rough.'

I was travelling, shortly after World War I, from Bombay to Mombasa in the British India liner Karagola. There were five of us on the upper deck. I was going to Tanganyika to build a house, the other four were going to Kenya— three to shoot and one to look at a farm he had purchased. The sea was rough and I am a bad sailor, so I spent most of my time dozing in a corner of the smoke room. The others sat at a table nearby playing bridge, smoking, and talking, mostly about sport. One day, on being awakened by a cramp in my leg, I heard the youngest member of the party say, 'Oh, I know all about tigers. I spent a fortnight with a Forest Officer in the Central Provinces last year.'

Admittedly two extreme cases, but they will serve to emphasize my contention that if you are not interested you will see nothing but the road you walk on, and if you have no desire to acquire knowledge and assume you can learn in a fortnight what cannot be learnt in a lifetime, you will remain ignorant to the end.



## *Chapter Five*

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**D**URING MY CHILDHOOD DAYS, AND the ten years I spent at school, and again while I was working in Bengal, and later between the two world wars, I spent all my holidays and leave in the jungles in and around Kaladhungi. If during those years I did not absorb as much jungle lore as I might have done, the fault is mine, for I had ample opportunities of doing so. Opportunities which will never be enjoyed by another, for pressure of population has brought under cultivation large areas on which in my time game wandered at will; while standardization of forests, with all the evils it brings in its train of wild life, has resulted in the total destruction of the trees that bore the flowers and the fruit that birds and animals live on. One result of this destruction, which in my opinion was quite unnecessary, has been to drive millions of monkeys out of the forests on to cultivated land, presenting Government with a problem which they are finding it difficult to deal with owing to the religious prejudices of the population, who look upon monkeys as sacred animals. A day will come when this problem will have to be faced, and the lot of those who have to face it will not be an enviable one, for in the United Provinces alone the monkey population— in my opinion— is less than ten million, and ten million monkeys living on crops and garden fruit present a very major problem.

Had I realized in those far-off days that a time would come when I would write this book, I would have tried to learn more than I did, for the time I spent in the jungles held unalloyed happiness for me, and that happiness I would now gladly share. My happiness, I believe, resulted from the fact that all wild life is happy in its natural surroundings. In nature there is no sorrow, and no repining. A bird from a flock, or an animal from a herd, is taken by hawk or by carnivorous beast and those that are left rejoice that their time had not come today, and have no thought of tomorrow. When I was ignorant I tried to rescue birds and young animals caught by hawks or by eagles, and deer caught by carnivorous beasts, but soon found that in trying to rescue one I caused the death of two. For the talons of hawk and

eagle, and the teeth and claws of carnivorous beasts, hold poison in the form of decayed flesh or blood, and unless expert treatment is immediately applied— which is not possible in a jungle— only one in a hundred of rescued birds or animals survive, and the killer, being deprived of its prey, immediately finds another victim to satisfy its hunger or the hunger of its young.

It is the function of certain birds and animals to maintain the balance in nature, and in order to carry out this function and at the same time provide themselves with the only food they can assimilate it is necessary for them to kill. This killing is— whenever possible— expeditiously and very expertly performed. From the killer's point of view expeditious killing is necessary to avoid attracting enemies, and I see no reason why it should not also be a provision of nature designed to minimize suffering.

Each species has its own method of killing and the method employed in individual cases depends to a great extent on the relative size of the killer and its victim. For instance, a peregrine falcon that does most of its killing on the ground will, on occasion, take a small bird on the wing and kill and eat it in the air. Again, a tiger that on occasion finds it necessary to hamstring an animal before overpowering and killing it will on another occasion strike down a victim with a single blow.

The jungle folk, in their natural surroundings, do not kill wantonly. Killing for sport is, however, occasionally indulged in, and some animals, notably pine-marten, civet cats, and mongoose, will, in abnormal circumstances, kill in excess of their needs. Sport has a wide meaning and can be interpreted in many ways. In the two instances I am going to narrate it should be interpreted liberally.

When Percy Wyndham was Commissioner of Kumaon he was asked by Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of the then United Provinces, to provide a python for the recently-opened Lucknow Zoo. Wyndham was on his winter tour when he received the request and on arrival at Kaladhungi he asked me if I knew of a python that would be a credit to our jungles and a suitable gift for a commissioner to present to a Governor. It so happened that I did know

of such a python, and next day Wyndham and two of his shikaris and I set out on an elephant to look at the python I had in mind. I had known this python for several years and I had no difficulty in guiding the elephant to it.

We found the python lying full stretch on the bed of a shallow stream with an inch or two of gin-clear water flowing over it, and it looked for all the world like a museum specimen in a glass case. When Wyndham saw it he said it was just the kind of python he had hoped to secure, and he ordered the *mahout* to undo a length of rope from the trappings of the elephant. When this had been done, Wyndham made a noose at one end of the rope and handing it to the shikaris told them to dismount from the elephant and noose the snake. With an exclamation of horror the two men said it would be quite impossible for them to do this. ‘Don’t be frightened,’ Wyndham said, adding that if the snake showed any sign of attacking them he would shoot it—he was armed with a heavy rifle. This, however, did not appeal to the men, so turning to me Wyndham asked me if I would like to help them. Very emphatically I assured him there was nothing in all the world that I would like less, so handing his rifle to me he joined the two men on the ground.

I greatly regret that instead of the rifle I did not have movie camera in my hands to make a record of the following few minutes, for I have never witnessed I more amusing scene. Wyndham’s plan was to noose the python’s tail and haul it to dry land, and then tie it up so that it could be loaded on to the elephant. When he explained this plan to the two shikaris they handed the noose to Wyndham and said that if he would pass the noose under the snake’s tail they would haul on the rope. Wyndham, however, was firm in his opinion that the noosing could be done more expertly by the shikaris. Eventually, after a lot of advancing and retreating and dumb play to avoid alarming the python, all three men entered the water, each attempting to hold the rope as far away from the noose as possible, and very gingerly they approached the python upstream. When they got to within an arm’s length of it, and while each was urging the other to take the noose and pass it under the tail, the python raised its head a foot or two out of the water, and started to turn and glide towards them. With a yell of ‘Bhago Sahib’ (‘Run sir’) the shikaris splashed out of the water, followed by

Wyndham, and all three dashed into the thick brushwood on the side of the stream while the python glided under the roots of a big *jamun* tree and disappeared from view, and the *mahout* and I nearly fell off the elephant laughing.

A month later I received a letter from Wyndham informing me he was arriving in Kaladhungi the following day, and that he would like to have another try to capture the python. Geoff Hopkins and a friend of his who had recently arrived from England were with me when I received the letter, and the three of us set off to see if the python was still in the place where I had last seen it. Near the tree under the roots of which the python lived was a sambhar's stamping ground. On this ground, the earth of which had been churned to fine dust by the hooves of generations of sambhar, we found the python lying dead, killed a few minutes before our arrival by a pair of otters.

The method employed by otters in killing python, and also crocodiles, for sport— for I have never known of their using either of these reptiles for food— is to approach, one on either side of their intended victim. When the python or crocodile turns its head to defend itself against the attack of, say, the otter on the right, the otter on the left jumps in— otter are very agile— and takes a bite at the victim's neck as close to its head as possible. Then when the victim turns and tries to defend itself against its assailant on the left the one on the right jumps in and takes a bite. In this way, biting alternately and a little at a time, the neck of the victim is bitten away right down to the bone before it is dispatched, for both python and crocodiles are very tenacious of life.

In the case I am narrating the python measured 17 feet 6 inches in length and 26 inches in girth, and the pair of otters must have run a considerable risk while killing it. Otter, however, are big-hearted animals and quite possibly — like human beings — they value their sport in proportion to the risk involved.

The second instance concerns a big bull elephant and a pair of tigers, and unless my theory of 'sport' is accepted I can give no reason for the

encounter between the lord and the king and queen of the Indian jungle. The encounter received wide publicity in the Indian press and many letters on the subject were written by renowned sportsmen to the editors of The Pioneer and The Statesman. The theories advanced for the encounter were: old vendetta, revenge for the killing of a cub, and killing for food. None of the writers of the articles and letters witnessed the encounter, and as a similar case from which deductions might have been made had never been known, the theories remained just theories and proved nothing.

I first heard of the encounter between the elephant and the tigers, which resulted in the death of the elephant, when the Superintendent, Tarai, and Bhabar asked me if it would take 200 gallons of paraffin oil to cremate the body of an elephant. Inquiries at the Superintendent's office in Naini Tal elicited the information that an elephant had been killed by the tigers at Tanakpur on rocky ground where it could not be buried, hence the claim for the cost of cremating it. This information was intensely interesting to me but unfortunately the trail was ten days old, and, further, the evidence had been burnt and heavy rain had obliterated all tracks.

The Naib-Tahsildar of Tanakpur, who had heard but not witnessed the encounter, was a friend of mine and I am indebted to him for the particulars that enable me to narrate the incident.

Tanakpur, terminus of a branch line of the Oudh-Tirhut Railway and a trading centre of considerable importance, is situated on the right bank of the Sarda river where it emerges from the foothills. Thirty years ago the river flowed along the foot of the high bank on which Tanakpur is built, but like all big rivers where they leave the foothills the Sarda keeps making new channels for itself, and at the time these events took place the river was two miles from Tanakpur. Between the main bank, which is about a hundred feet high, and the river there were several small channels and on the islands formed by these channels there was moderate to heavy tree, scrub, and grass jungle.

One day two malhas (boatmen) living in Tanakpur went to the Sarda river to net fish. They stayed out longer than they had intended and the sun was

setting when they started on their two-mile walk home. On emerging from a dense patch of grass on to the last channel that lay between them and the high bank, they saw two tigers standing on the far side of the channel, which here was about forty yards wide, with a trickle of water in it, and as the tigers were between them and their objective the men crouched down where they were, intending to wait until the tigers moved away. These men had seen tigers on many occasions and were not unduly alarmed. This point is important for when anyone suffers from nerves in a jungle, imagination is liable to play strange tricks. At this stage of the proceedings there was still a little light from the recently set sun, and the full moon having just risen behind the two men the tigers standing on the open ground were in clear view. Presently there was a movement in the grass through which they had just come and out on to their side of the channel, stepped an elephant with big tusks. This tusker was well known in the Tanakpur forests and it had made itself unpopular with the Forest Department owing to its habit of pulling down the pillars supporting the roof of the Chene forest bungalow. It was not, however, a rogue in the sense of molesting human beings.

When the elephant stepped out on to the channel and saw the tigers on the far side it raised its trunk and trumpeted and started to move towards them. The tigers now turned to face the elephant and as it approached them one demonstrated in front of it while the other circled round behind and sprang on its back. Swinging its head round, the elephant tried to get at the tiger on its back with its trunk, and the one in front then sprang on to its head. The elephant was now screaming with rage, while the tigers were giving vent to full-throated roars. When tigers roar with anger it is a very terrifying sound, and since the screaming of the maddened elephant was added to this terrifying sound, it is little wonder that the malhas lost their nerve and, abandoning their nets and catch of fish, sprinted for Tanakpur at their best speed.

In Tanakpur preparations were being made for the evening meal when the sounds of the fight were first heard. Shortly thereafter, when the malhas arrived with the news that an elephant and two tigers were fighting, a few bold spirits went to the edge of the high bank to try to see the fight. When it was realized, however, that the contestants were coming towards them, a



stampede took place and in a few minutes every door in Tanakpur was fast closed. Opinions on the duration of the fight differed. Some maintained that it lasted all night, while others maintained that it ended at midnight. Mr Matheson, a retired gentleman whose bungalow was on the high bank immediately above where the fight took place, said it lasted for many hours, and that he had never heard more appalling or terrifying sounds. Guns shots were heard during the night, but it is not clear whether they were fired by the police or by Mr Matheson; anyway, they did not have the desired effect of stopping the fight and driving the animals away.

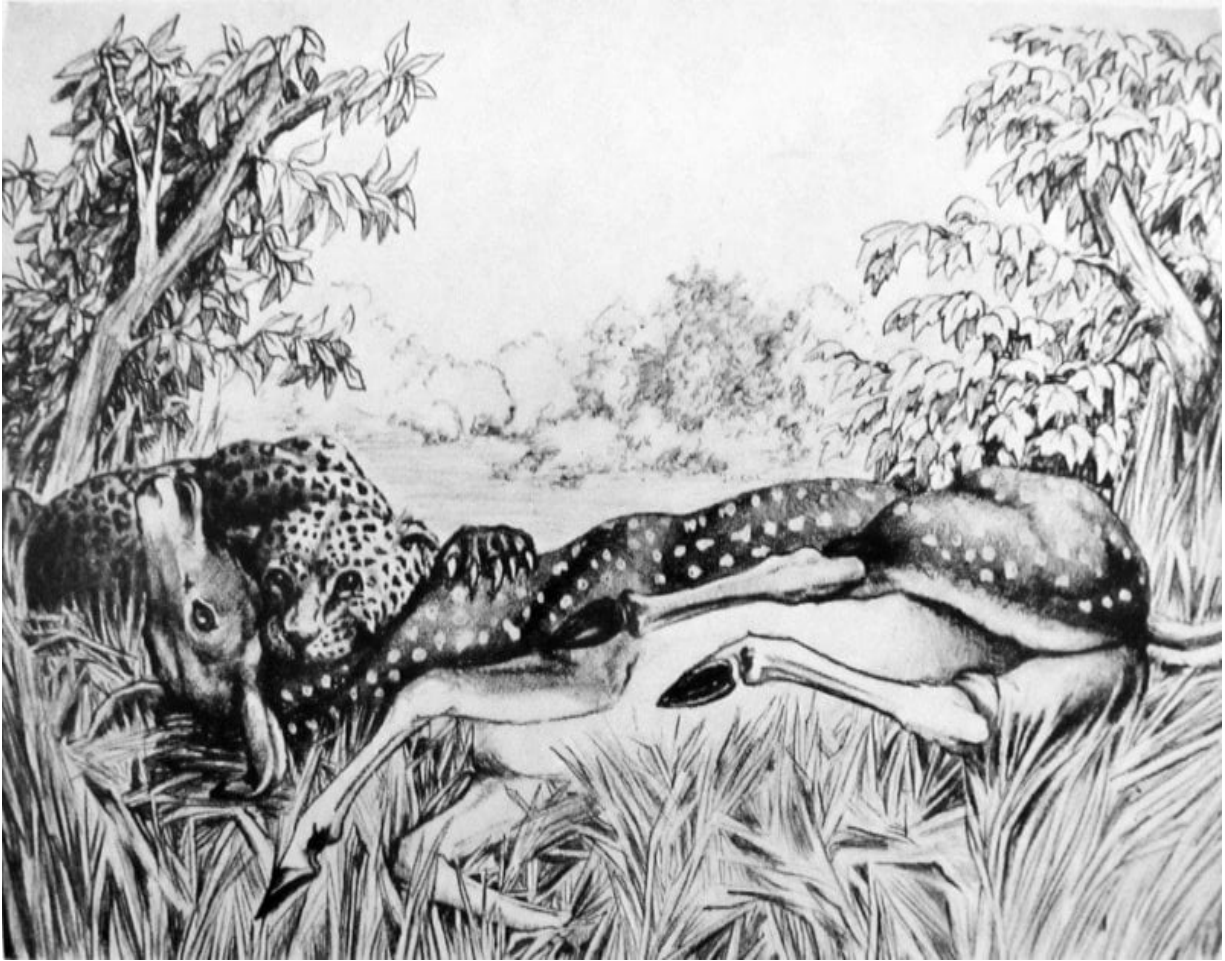
In the morning the residents of Tanakpur again assembled on the high ground, and at the foot of the hundred-foot boulder-strewn bank they saw the elephant lying dead. From the injuries described by the Naib-Tahsildar, it was evident that it had died of loss of blood. No portion of the elephant had been eaten, and no dead or injured tigers were found at the time or subsequently in the vicinity of Tanakpur.

I do not think that the tigers, at the onset, had any intention of killing the elephant. The theory of an old vendetta, anger at the killing of a cub, and killing for food are not convincing. The fact remains, however, that a big bull elephant, carrying tusks weighing ninety pounds, was killed near Tanakpur by two tigers and I am of the opinion that what started as a lark—by a pair of mating tigers when an elephant tried to shoo them out of his way — developed into a real fight. I am also of the opinion that when the second tiger sprang on the elephant's head it clawed out the elephant's eyes and that thereafter the blinded animal dashed about aimlessly until it came to the high bank. Here on the round loose boulders, which afforded no foothold, it was practically anchored and at the mercy of the tigers who — possibly because of injuries received in the fight— showed no mercy.

All carnivorous animals kill their victims with their teeth, and those that stalk their prey depend on their claws not only to catch and hold but also, on occasion, to disable a victim before dispatching it with their teeth. The act of killing, except in the case of animals that run down their prey, is so seldom witnessed in the jungles, and, when witnessed, the initial movements of the killer are so rapid and consequently so difficult to follow

that after witnessing, possibly, twenty kills by tigers and leopards I can give no precise description of the movements of the killer at the actual moment of contact with its victim. In only one of the cases I have witnessed— a *cheetal* hind feeding down-wind— was a head-on attack made. This is understandable, for the horns of the animals usually killed by tigers and leopards are capable of inflicting very serious wounds. The attacks in the other cases witnessed were made by the killers coming up from behind, or at an angle, and with a singh spring or short rush getting hold of their victims with their claws, and then with a lightning-fast movement seizing them by the throat and bringing them to the ground.

In bringing an animal to the ground great care has to be exercised, for a full-grown *sambhar* or *cheetal* could with a single kick disembowel a tiger or a leopard. To avoid injury, and also to prevent the victim from struggling to its feet, the head, in the act of pulling it to the ground, is twisted round, as shown in the sketch. When an animal is thus brought down and held it can kick indefinitely without doing its assailant any injury, and it cannot rise or roll over without dislocating its neck. It occasionally happens that when a heavy animal is brought to the ground the fall dislocates the neck, and it also occasionally happens that the neck is dislocated by the canine teeth of the assailant. When the neck is not dislocated either by its fall or by the attacker's teeth, the victim is killed by strangulation.



Relative position of killer and victim when a leopard, or tiger, is killing a big animal

I have never seen an animal hamstrung by a leopard, but have seen many cases of hamstringing by tigers. In all those cases the hamstringing was done by the claws and not by the teeth of tigers. A friend once brought me news of the killing of one of his cows on the Semdhar ridge six miles from Naini Tal. He owned a big herd of cattle and had seen many kills by tigers and leopards and from the absence of injuries on this particular cow's neck and from the way the flesh had been torn in shreds he suspected that it had been killed and partly eaten by some unknown animal. The day was still young when he brought me the news, and two hours later we arrived at the kill. The cow, a full-grown animal, had been killed on a fifty-foot-wide fire track and no attempt had been made to drag it away. When the condition of the kill had been described to me I had come to the conclusion that the cow had been killed by a Himalayan black bear. Bears are not habitual meat-

eaters but they do occasionally kill, and not being equipped for killing, as tigers and leopards are, their method of killing is very clumsy. The cow had not been killed by a bear, however, but by a tiger, and killed in a very unusual way. It had first been hamstrung, and then killed by being disembowelled. Having killed the cow the tiger had eaten a portion of the hindquarters by tearing away the flesh with its claw. Tracking on the hard ground was not possible, so I spent the rest of the day searching the surrounding forests to try to get a shot at the tiger on foot. Near sundown I returned to the kill and sat up over it all night on the branch of a tree. The tiger did not return to his kill, nor did he return to the kills of nine other animals— six cows and three young buffaloes— that he killed in identically the same way.

This method of killing was intensely cruel from a human being's point of view, but not from the point of view of the tiger. He had to kill to provide himself with food, and his method of killing was dependent on his physical condition. The fact that the tiger could not use his canine teeth to kill, or to drag away his kills, and that he had to use his claws instead of his teeth to tear the flesh from his kills, was proof that he was suffering from some physical defect. This defect, I am convinced, had resulted from a carelessly fired high velocity bullet having shot away a portion of his lower jaw. I came to this conviction on seeing the tiger's first kill and my conviction—that he was wounded and that he was still suffering from his wound— was strengthened by the lengthening period between the kills, and the fact that he was able to eat less from each succeeding kill. His wound had evidently been received over a kill and this would account for his never returning for a second meal. The killing stopped after the tenth kill and as no tiger was shot or found dead in that area I am inclined to think that the tiger crawled away into a cave, of which there were many on a nearby hill, and there succumbed to his wound.

Admittedly this was an unusual case, but it was not the only case I know of hamstringing, for two of the biggest buffaloes I have ever seen killed by tigers had been hamstrung by the claws of tigers before being pulled down and killed by the tiger's teeth.



## Chapter Six

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WHEN THE RUBBER OF THE catapult Tom gave me perished, I made myself a pellet bow. The difference between a bow that shoots a pellet and one that shoots an arrow is that the former is shorter and stiffer, and that it has two strings between which a small square of webbing is fixed to hold the pellet. Practice is needed to shoot with a pellet bow, for if the wrist of the hand holding the bow is not turned at the exact moment that the pellet is released, very serious injury can result to the thumb of the bow hand. A pellet bow can shoot with twice the velocity that a catapult can, but it is not as accurate as a catapult. The Naini Tal Treasury, which was guarded by Gurkhas of the Regular Army, was just across the road from our summer home. The Gurkhas were keen pellet bowmen and I was often invited into the Treasury grounds to compete with them. In the grounds was a short wooden post on which was hung a great circular gong for striking the hours. On this post a match-box used to be placed and from a range of twenty yards the man selected to compete with me, and I, each fired one shot in turn. The Havildar of the guard, a short stocky man as strong as a bull, was the best shot of them all, but—much to the delight of the onlookers—he never succeeded in beating me.

Necessity compelled me to use a pellet bow, and though I acquired sufficient accuracy with it to continue my collection of birds, I never took to it as I had taken to a catapult, and after reading Fennimore Cooper's thrilling books I supplemented my pellet bow with a bow to project arrows. If Cooper's Red Indians could shoot game with an arrow, I saw no reason why I should not be able to do the same. The people in our part of India do not use bows and arrows so I had no pattern to work on; however, after several attempts I made a bow to my liking and with this bow and two arrows—tipped with sharp nails—I set out to emulate a Red Indian. I had no illusions about the killing powers of my arrows, or their defensive value, so I walked warily, for in addition to the jungle fowl and peafowl that I hoped to shoot, there were in our jungles many animals of which I was mightily afraid. To enable me to approach the game I wanted to shoot, and

to assist me in seeking protection in trees when danger threatened, I discarded my shoes, for there were no thin rubber-soled shoes in those days and the choice lay between bare feet and hard leather shoes which were neither suitable for stalking in nor for climbing trees.

Two watercourses, dry except after heavy rain, ran down from the foothills and met at the lower end of our estate. Both had sandy beds and in the jungle between them, which was a quarter of a mile wide at the bottom end, a mile wide at the top end, and two miles long, was game of all kinds. The canal in which the girls bathed formed a boundary between our estate and the jungle, and I had only to cross it by a fallen tree to get in touch with the game, which included the birds I hoped to shoot. In later years, when I had a cine-camera, I spent many days on a tree on our side of the canal, trying to film tigers that came down to the canal to drink. And it was in this jungle that I shot my last tiger, on my release from the army after Hitler's war. The tiger killed— at different times— a horse, a calf, and two bullocks, and as it resisted all my attempts to drive it away I shot it. Sister Maggie doubted my ability to hold a rifle steady for many forms of malaria contracted in many jungles had, she thought, impaired the steadiness of my hands. However, to make quite sure of my shot I called the tiger up for judgement, found it guilty, and shot it through the eye as it was looking at me at the range of a few feet. It was murder, of course, but justifiable murder; for though I was willing to let the tiger live in the dense patch of lantana it had selected for its home— two hundred yards from the village— and pay compensation for all the animals it killed, it was difficult to replace these animals owing to the country-wide shortage of farm animals brought about by the war, and— as I have said— the tiger resisted all my attempts to drive it away.

Magog and I had explored the strip of jungle between the two watercourses very thoroughly and I knew all the places to be avoided; even so, I did not consider it was safe to cross the canal by the fallen tree and go hunting jungle-fowl and peafowl until I had satisfied myself that there were no tigers in it. And this I did by examining the watercourse on the left-hand side of the jungle. The tigers that frequented the strip invariably came from the west at about sunset and, unless they had made a kill, returned before

sunrise to the heavy jungle from which they had come. By examining the sandy stretches along the bed of this watercourse it was possible to ascertain whether a tiger had crossed into the jungle that I looked on as my private preserve, and, if so, whether it had remained or left. On the occasions on which I found only a one-way track I left the jungle severely alone and went elsewhere to look for birds.

This watercourse was of never-ending interest to me for, in addition to tigers, all the animals and all the crawling creatures that lived in the jungles that stretched for many miles on either side, crossed it, and in doing so left a photographic record of their passage. It was here, first armed with a catapult, then with a bow, later with a muzzle-loader, and later still with a modern rifle, that I added— a little at a time— to my store of jungle lore. Starting out as the sun was rising, and moving noiselessly on my bare feet, I saw at one time or another all the animals and all the crawling creatures that crossed the watercourse, until a day came when I was able to identify each by the track it made. But here was only a small beginning for I had yet to learn the habits of the animals, their language, and the part they played in the scheme of nature. And while I was accumulating knowledge of these interesting subjects I was also absorbing the language of the birds and understanding their functions in nature's garden.

The first thing I did then was to divide the birds and animals and the crawling creatures into groups. Starting with the birds, I divided them into six groups:

- (a) Birds that beautified nature's garden. In this group I put minivets, orioles, and sunbirds.
- (b) Birds that filled the garden with melody: thrushes, robins, and shamas.
- (c) Birds that regenerated the garden: barbets, hornbills, and bulbuls.
- (d) Birds that warned of danger: drongos, red jungle-fowl, and babblers.
- (e) Birds that maintained the balance in nature: eagles, hawks, and owls.



(f) Birds that performed the duty of scavengers: vultures, kites, and crows.

The animals I divided into five groups:

(g) Animals that beautified nature's garden. In this group I put deer, antelope, and monkeys.

(h) Animals that helped to regenerate the garden by opening up and aerating the soil: bears, pigs and porcupines.

(i) Animals that warned of danger: deer, monkeys, and squirrels.

(j) Animals that maintained the balance in nature: tigers, leopards, and wild dogs.

(k) Animals that acted as scavengers: hyaenas, jackals, and pigs.

The crawling creatures I divided into two groups:

(l) Poisonous snakes. In this group I put cobras, kraits, and vipers.

(m) Non-poisonous snakes: Pythons, grass-snakes, and dhamin (rat snakes).

Having divided the principal birds and animals into groups according to the functions they performed, the other members of the jungle folk that performed similar duties were added—as my knowledge increased—to the groups to which they belonged. The next step was to make myself familiar with the language of the jungle folk, and to learn to imitate the calls of those birds and animals whose calls are within the range of human lips and of a human throat. All birds and all animals have their own language and though—with few exceptions—one species cannot speak the language of another species, all the jungle folk understand each other's language. The best three of the exceptions are, the racket-tailed drongo, the rufous-backed shrike, and the gold-fronted green bulbul. To bird lovers the racket-tailed drongo is a never-ending source of pleasure and interest for, in addition to being the most courageous bird in our jungles, he can imitate to perfection the calls of most birds and of one animal, the cheetal, and he has a great sense of humour. Attaching himself to a flock of ground-feeding birds—jungle-fowl, babblers, or thrushes—he takes up a commanding position on

a dead branch and, while regaling the jungle with his own songs and the songs of the other birds, keeps a sharp look-out for enemies in the way of hawks, cats, snakes, and small boys armed with catapults, and his warning of the approach of danger is never disregarded. His services are not disinterested, for in return for protection he expects the flock he is guarding to provide him with food. His sharp eyes miss nothing, and the moment he sees that one of the birds industriously scratching up or turning over the dead leaves below him has unearthed a fat centipede or a juicy scorpion he darts at it screaming like a hawk, or screaming as a bird of the species he is trying to dispossess does when caught by a hawk. Nine times out of ten he succeeds in wresting the prize from the finder, and returning to his perch kills and eats the titbit at his leisure, and having done so continues his interrupted song.

Racket-tailed drongos are also found in association with cheetal, feeding on the grasshoppers and other winged insects disturbed by the deer; and having heard the *cheetal* give their alarm call on seeing a leopard or a tiger, he learns the call and repeats it with great exactitude. I was present on one occasion when a leopard killed a yearling cheetal. Moving the leopard away for a few hundred yards I returned to the kill and breaking down a small bush tied the kill to the stump, and as there were no suitable trees nearby I sat on the ground with my back to a bush and my cine-camera resting on my drawn-up knees. Presendy a racket-tailed drongo arrived in company with a flock of white-throated laughing thrush. On catching sight of the kill the drongo came close for a better look at it and, in doing so, saw me. The kill was a natural sight to him but my presence appeared to puzzle him; however, after satisfying himself that I did not look dangerous he flew back to the white-throats who were chattering noisily on the ground. The birds were on my left and I was expecting the leopard to appear from my right front when suddenly the drongo gave the alarm call of a cheetal, on hearing which the white-throats— some fifty in number— rose in a body and went screaming into the branches above them, whence they started giving their alarm call. By watching the drongo I was able to follow every move of the unseen leopard who, annoyed by the baiting of the birds, worked round until he was immediately behind me. The bush in front of which I was sitting had few leaves on it, and on catching sight of me the leopard gave a

low growl and retreated into the jungle, followed by the drongo. The drongo was now thoroughly enjoying himself and his rendering of the alarm call of *cheetal* filled me with admiration and with envy, for though I could have competed with him on a single call I could not have rung the changes on the different ages of the deer he was imitating as quickly or as smoothly as he was doing.

When taking up my position on the ground, I knew the leopard would see me the moment he returned to his kill, and I expected to get my picture while he was trying to take the kill away. After shaking off the drongo the leopard returned a second time and though, by growling fiercely, he showed his resentment at my presence and at the sound my camera made, I succeeded in exposing fifty feet of film— at a range of twenty yards— while he was struggling to break the creeper with which I had tied the kill to the stump.

I do not know if racket-tailed drongos can learn to talk, but I do know that they can learn to whistle tunes. Some years ago the Anglo-Indian station-master of Mankapur Junction on the Bengal and North-Western Railway, now the Oudh-Tirhut Railway, supplemented his income by teaching drongos and shamas to whistle tunes. Trains halted at the junction for breakfast and lunch and it was a common sight to see passengers running over to the station-master's bungalow to hear his birds, and returning with a cage containing a bird that whistled the tune they fancied most. For these birds, plus an ornate cage, the station-master charged a flat rate of thirty rupees.



## Chapter Seven

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HAVING STATED THAT THE BOOK of Nature has no beginning and no end, I would be the last to claim that I have learned all that is to be learnt of any of the subjects dealt with in *Jungle Lore*, or that the book contains any expert knowledge. But having spent so much of my life with nature, and having made a hobby of jungle lore, I have observed a little knowledge, and that knowledge I am now imparting without reservations. I do not flatter myself that all who read these pages will agree with my deductions and statements, but that need be no cause for quarrel, for no two or more people look at any object with the same eyes. Take, for example, three people looking at a rose. One will see only the colour of the flower, another will see only the shape, while the third will see both the colour and the shape. All three will have seen what they were looking for, and all three will have been right. When the present Prime Minister of the United Provinces of India and I differed on a subject under discussion, he said, 'We can agree to differ on this point, and still remain friends.' So if any reader differs with me on any point I raise, let us take the Prime Minister's advice and remain friends.

In the beginning I found it difficult to distinguish between the tracks of different animals that left more or less similar impressions on the bed of the watercourse. For instance, the tracks of a young *sambhar* and of a young blue-bull are very similar to the tracks of a big pig. But by watching each of these animals crossing the watercourse and then examining its tracks I soon found that I could, at a glance, distinguish between the tracks of a pig and the tracks of all the other cloven-hoofed animals in the jungle. A pig, like all deer, has rudimentary hoofs at the back of the main hoofs. In a pig these rudimentary hoofs are longer than they are in a deer, and except when a pig is crossing hard ground these rudimentary hoofs leave a distinct impression, whereas in the case of deer the rudimentary hoofs only leave an impression when the main hoofs have sunk in soft ground. Again, until one has gained some experience it is difficult to tell the difference between the pug marks of a tiger cub, and the pug marks of a leopard, when both are of the same

superficial area. The difference between two pug marks can be determined by looking at the imprint of the toes, for the toes of a tiger cub are larger and out of all proportion to the toes of a leopard when both pug marks cover the same superficial area.

The tracks of hyaenas and those of wild dogs are often confused with the tracks of leopards. Here— when there is any doubt— two fundamental rules can be applied to determine the species of the animal that has made the track:

(a) All animals that run down their prey have big toes as compared with their pads, and all animals that stalk their prey have small toes as compared with their pads.

(b) The imprint of the toe-nails shows in the tracks of all animals that run down their prey, and— except when startled, or when in the act of springing— the imprint of the claws does not show in the tracks of animals that stalk their prey.

If you look at the tracks of a house dog and cat, you will see what I mean by big toes and small pads in the track of the former, and small toes and big pads in the track of the latter.

When living in an area in which snakes are plentiful, it is advisable on occasion to know— from its tracks— in which direction the snake has gone and to determine, more or less accurately, if the snake was poisonous or nonpoisonous. The girth of a snake can also be assessed from its track. I will deal with these three points in the order in which I have mentioned them:

(a) Direction: For the purpose of my illustration I should like you to imagine a field of closely-planted lucern, six inches high. If you were to run a roller across the field from right to left you would notice that the lucern plants were laid flat in the direction in which the roller had been run, so even if you had not been present when the roller was being run across the field you would have no difficulty in knowing that it had been run from right to left. If you are not blessed with good

eyesight, take a magnifying glass and look carefully at any patch of sand or dust, and you will note that particles of the sand or dust stand up higher than other particles. Call these particles that stand upright the 'pile'. When a snake passes over sand or dust it lays the pile flat in the direction in which it has gone, in the same way as the roller did with the lucern. Every surface like sand, dust, ashes, and so on, on which a snake leaves a track, has a pile on it, and remembering this, you can always tell in which direction a snake has gone by looking at the flattened pile.

(b) Poisonous or non-poisonous: You will note that I have said you can determine more or less accurately from the track of a snake whether it is poisonous or non-poisonous. There is no hard and fast rule— as in the case of direction— by which the species of a snake can be determined from its track. For though I have only seen the tracks of a few of the three hundred or more varieties of snakes in India, I know of two exceptions from the general rule I apply to determine the species from the track. The two exceptions are the hamadryad or king cobra in the case of poisonous snakes, and the python in the case of non-poisonous snakes.

Poisonous snakes, with the exception I have mentioned, lie in wait for their victims or approach them unseen. They therefore have no need for speed and move over the ground comparatively slowly, and when a snake moves slowly it can only do so by excessive wriggling. Take for example a Russell's Viper, or a krait, India's most deadly snake. If you watch one of these snakes moving over the ground, say over sand or dust, you will note that it travels in a series of short curves, and if you examine the track left by the snake, you will observe that it shows as a series of short curves. When, therefore, you see the track of a snake that shows excessive wriggling, you can be reasonably sure it is the track of a poisonous snake. Hamadryads live almost exclusively on other snakes and as many of their intended victims can move with speed, the hamadryad has acquired a turn of speed which is said to equal that of a horse. On this point I am ignorant for I have never chased or been chased on horseback by this king of snakes, which attains a length of seventeen feet. However, having killed a few

hamadryads up to fourteen feet in length, I know they can travel fast, and this turn of speed I believe they have acquired to enable them to catch other fast-moving snakes. Non-poisonous snakes, with the exception I have mentioned, are slim-built, active, and speedy; and some, like the dhamin or rat snake and the black rock snake, can cover the ground at incredible speed. Speed in non-poisonous snakes may be essential partly to secure their prey and partly to outstrip their enemies, of whom they have many. When a snake covers the ground at great speed it leaves a more or less straight track, and where there are slight inequalities in the ground the belly of the snake only touches the hills, and not the valleys. When, therefore, you see a track that is comparatively straight you can be reasonably sure it is the track of a non-poisonous snake. The only poisonous snake whose track you might confuse with that of a non-poisonous one is a hamadryad, but the chances of your doing so are small, for the hamadryad is rare and is found only in a few localities.

(c) Girth: To estimate the girth of a snake from the track it makes, measure the width of the track at several points, and multiply the mean width by four. This will give the girth of the snake, though only approximately, for the width of the track will depend on the surface on which it is made. For instance, if the track is made on a light film of dust, it will be narrower than it would be if made on deep dust.

In India twenty thousand people die each year of snake-bite. Of these twenty thousand, I believe only half die of snake poison; the other half die of shock or fright, or a combination of the two, from the bite of non-poisonous snakes. Though Indians have lived with snakes for thousands of years it is surprising how little they know about them, and with very few exceptions Indians look upon all snakes as poisonous. The shock of a bite from a big snake is considerable, and when in addition to the shock the victim jumps to the conclusion that he has been bitten by a poisonous snake and that he is doomed, it is not surprising that such a large number of people succumb— as I believe they do— to the bite of non-poisonous snakes.

In most villages in India there are men who are credited with being able to cure people bitten by snakes. As only some ten per cent of the snakes in India are poisonous, these men build up a great reputation for themselves. They give their services free and do good work among the poor, for though they cannot with their nostrums and charms cure anyone who has received a lethal dose of snake poison, they do save the lives of many people bitten by non-poisonous snakes, by infusing them with courage and confidence.

Most hospitals in India are equipped to deal with snake-bite victims, but as the poor have no means of transport other than their own legs or the shoulders of companions, in many cases they arrive at hospital when they have passed the stage at which expert medical treatment would be of benefit to them. In all hospitals charts are exhibited of poisonous snakes. Except where rewards are paid for the destruction of poisonous snakes these charts are of little value, for most people are bitten while moving about barefoot at night, and therefore do not see the snakes that have bitten them. And again, there is a widespread belief that if the person bitten kills the snake, the snake in turn will kill him, so few snakes are produced in hospitals by snake-bite victims to enable doctors to determine whether the patient was bitten by a poisonous or a non-poisonous species.

My method— when I am in doubt— of determining whether a snake is poisonous or non-poisonous, is to kill it and look at its mouth. If it has two rows of teeth I class it as non-poisonous; while if it has two fangs on the upper jaw— hinged in the viper family and fixed in the cobra family— I class it as poisonous. A bite from the former class exhibits a number of teeth-marks; a bite from the latter class exhibits two fang-marks, though in some cases only one fang-mark, as happens occasionally when the striker is not at right angles to the object struck, or when the object struck, say a finger or a toe, is too small for both fangs to make contact.





## Chapter Eight

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**L**EARNING THE CALLS OF THE jungle folk was not difficult, nor was it difficult to imitate some of the birds and a few of the animals, for I had a good ear, and being young my lips and vocal chords were pliant. Learning the calls and being able to identify every bird and animal by its call was not sufficient, however, for, with the exception of those birds whose function it is to fill nature's garden with melody, birds and animals do not call without a reason, and the call differs according to the reason for which it is made.

I was sitting one day on a tree watching a herd of *cheetal* in an open glade. There were fifteen stags and hinds in the herd, and five young ones all about the same age. One of the young ones that had been sleeping in the sun got to its feet, stretched itself, and kicking up its heels raced across the glade towards a fallen tree; this was a signal to the other young ones that a game of 'follow the leader' was on. Nose to tail the five cleared the tree, circled around, raced through the glade and again cleared the tree. After the second jump the leader carried on into the jungle beyond, followed by its companions. A hind that had been lying down now got to her feet, looked in the direction in which the young ones had gone, and gave a sharp bark. The bark brought the truants racing back to the glade, but it had not the slightest effect on the grown animals, who continued to lie down or to crop the short grass. A footpath used by woodcutters passed within a short distance of the glade and presently along this path came a man carrying an axe over his shoulder. From my raised position I saw the man while he was still a long way off, for the jungle in the direction in which he was coming was comparatively open. When the man was a hundred yards from the glade one of the hinds saw him; gave a sharp bark and the whole herd without a moment's hesitation dashed away into thick cover.

The bark of the anxious mother recalling her young one and the bark of the hind warning the herd of the presence of a human being had, to my untrained ears, sounded exactly alike and it was not until I had gained

experience that I detected that the difference in the call of animals, and also of birds, when calling for different reasons was not to be found in the call itself, but in the intonation of the call. A dog barks, and all who hear it know it is barking to welcome its master; or barking with excitement at being taken for a run; or barking with frustration at a treed cat; or barking with anger at a stranger; or just barking because it is chained up. In all these cases it is the intonation of the bark that enables the hearer to determine why the dog is barking.

When I had absorbed sufficient knowledge to enable me to identify all the jungle folk by their calls, ascribe a reason for the call, and imitate many of them sufficiently well to get some birds and a few animals to come to me or to follow me, the jungles took on an added interest, for not only was I able to take an interest in the surroundings within sight but also in the surroundings to the limit of my hearing. But first it was necessary to be able to locate, or pinpoint sound. Animals who live day and night with fear can pinpoint sound with exactitude, and fear can teach human beings to do the same. Sounds that are repeated— as, for instance, a langorbarking at a leopard, or a *cheetal* barking at a suspicious movement, or a peafowl calling at a tiger— are not difficult to locate, nor do they indicate immediate danger calling for instant action. It is the sound that is only heard once, like the snapping of a twig, a low growl, or the single warning call of bird or of animal, that is difficult to locate, is of immediate danger, and calls for instant action. Having acquired the ability— through fear— of being able to pinpoint sound, that is, to assess the exact direction and distance of all sounds heard, I was able to follow the movement of unseen leopards and tigers, whether when in the jungle by daylight, or in bed at night, for the situation of our home enabled me to hear all the jungle sounds.

In return for the birds I collected for him, Stephen Dease gave me the gun I have already referred to. This gun was a double-barrelled muzzle-loader which in its young days must have been quite a good weapon, but whose efficiency had been reduced by half by an over-charge of powder which had split the right barrel. The explosion had also evidently broken the stock, and when Stephen passed the old warrior over to me the barrels and stock were held precariously together with lappings of brass wire. However, as Kunwar

Singh— my poacher friend— pointed out to me, the left barrel was sound and capable of rendering good service; a prediction that proved correct for I kept the larder for a considerable family supplied for two winters with jungle-fowl and pea-fowl, and on one memorable occasion I crept up close enough to a *cheetal* to shoot it with No. 4 shot.

I am not ashamed to admit that all the birds I shot with the muzzle-loader were shot sitting. Ammunition was not easy to come by and to eke out my scanty supply every shot had to be effective. If during a morning or an evening I fired two or three shots, I brought back two or three birds, and no other method of shooting the birds could possibly have given me more pleasure.

I was returning one evening from the foothills at the upper end of the jungle between the two watercourses I have mentioned. The weather for several weeks had been very dry, making stalking difficult, and the sun was near setting when I turned my face for home, with a jungle-fowl and a *kalege* pheasant in the string bag in which I carried my powder and shot. A blue-black cloud was showing over a shoulder of the foothills to the west as I emerged from a deep ravine in which I had shot the *kalege* pheasant. This ominous-looking cloud, following a spell of dry weather and a sultry day when not a leaf or a blade of grass had stirred, presaged a hailstorm. Hailstorms along the foothills are feared by man and beast, for in a few minutes a belt of cultivation, maybe only a quarter of a mile wide or maybe ten miles, can be laid waste and children and cattle killed if caught in the open. I have never seen a wild animal killed by hailstones, but I have seen the jungle strewn with dead birds, including vultures and peafowl.

I had three miles to go, but by taking a direct line for home and cutting the corners in the winding game-tracks I could reduce the distance by half a mile. I was now facing the oncoming blue-black cloud, across the face of which forked lightning was continuous. The birds and animals were silent and the only sound to be heard as I entered a thick belt of heavy timber was the distant rumble of thunder. Under the dense canopy of leaves the light was fading and as I loped along, taking care to see where I placed my feet for I was running barefoot, I heard the wind that always precedes a

hailstorm. When I was half-way through the timber the wind struck the forest, sending the carpet of tinder-dry dead leaves swirling along the ground with the noise of a suddenly released torrent of water, and at the same moment I heard a scream— Dansay's 'banshee', without a doubt. Starting on a minor note the scream developed into a terrifying shriek, and then died away on a long-drawn-out sobbing note. Some sounds have the effect of petrifying one, others galvanize one into instant action: the scream — which I placed as being above and a little behind me— had the latter effect on me. A few weeks previously— in company with Magog— I had run from a tiger as I thought I should never run again, but I did not know then that terror of the unknown could lend wings to one's feet. To my credit be it noted that I did not throw away my gun and the heavy string bag, and regardless of thorns and of stubbed toes I ran until I reached home. Thunder was booming overhead and the first of the hailstones were hissing down as I ran up the steps of the veranda, and in the general confusion of fastening doors and windows and making all secure against the storm, my breathless and excited condition escaped attention.

Dansay had said that hearing the banshee brought calamity to the hearer and his family, and fearing that I would be blamed for any calamity that befell the family, I said not a word about my experience. Danger of any kind has an attraction for everyone, including small boys, and though for many days I avoided the area in which I had heard the banshee, a day came when I found myself back at the edge of the heavy timber. As on the evening of the storm a wind was blowing, and after I had been standing with my back to a tree for some minutes, I again heard the scream. Restraining with difficulty my impulse to run away, I stood trembling behind the tree and after the scream had been repeated a few times, I decided to creep up and have a look at the banshee. No calamity had resulted from my hearing her and I thought that if by chance she saw me now, and saw that I was a very small boy, he would not kill me; so— with my heart beating in my throat— I crept forward as slowly and as noiselessly as a shadow, until I saw Dansay's banshee.

In some violent storm of long ago a giant of the forest had been partly uprooted and had been prevented from crashing to the ground by falling

across another and slightly smaller giant. The weight of the bigger tree had given the smaller tree a permanent bend, and when a gust of wind lifted the bigger one and then released it, it swayed back on to the supporting tree. At the point of impact the wood of both trees had died and worn as smooth as glass, and it was the friction between these two smooth surfaces that was emitting the terrifying scream. Not until I had laid the gun on the ground and climbed the leaning tree and sat on it while the scream was being repeated below me, was I satisfied that I had found the terror that was always at the back of my mind when I was alone in the jungles. From that day I date the desire I acquired of following up and getting to the bottom of every unusual thing I saw or heard in the jungles and for this I am grateful to Dansay for, by frightening me with his banshee, he started me on the compiling of many exciting and interesting jungle detective stories.

Detective stories of fiction usually start with the evidence of some violent crime or attempted crime, and the enthralled reader—oblivious for the time being that he is reading fiction—is carried along through exciting scene after scene until finally the criminal is detected and made to suffer for his crime. My jungle detective stories do not start in the same way, nor do they always end with punishment for the criminal. I will select at random two of these stories from memory's library.

## (1)

I was camping at a Forest Department bungalow ten miles from Kaladhungi and had gone out early one morning to try to shoot a jungle-fowl or a peafowl for the pot. To the left of the road I was on was a densely-wooded low hill with game of all kinds on it, and to the right was cultivated land with a narrow strip of bush-covered ground between the cultivation and the road. When the village folk started moving about their fields in the morning, birds that were feeding on the crops rose and flew over the road, offering excellent shots. My luck was out that morning, for the birds that crossed the road were out of range of my small bore gun, and I got to the end of the cultivation without firing a shot.

While keeping an eye open for birds, I had also kept an eye on the road, and a hundred yards from where the chances of my shooting a bird ended I noted that a big male leopard had come down the hill from my left on to the road. For a few yards the leopard had kept to the left of the road, then crossed to the right and lain down near a bush. From this point the leopard had gone forward for twenty yards, and again lain down by a bush. The behaviour of the leopard indicated that he had been interested in something, and quite evidently that something had not been on the road, for if it had he would have gone forward through the bushes and not along the road. Going back to where he had first lain I knelt down to see the view he had obtained from this spot. Where the cultivation and the narrow strip of bushes ended there was an open stretch of ground, the grass on which had been cropped close by village cattle. This stretch of ground was visible from the leopard's first viewpoint, and I found it was also visible from his second viewpoint, so what he had been interested in was evidently on the open ground.

Keeping under cover of the screen of bushes, the leopard had gone forward for another fifty yards to where the bushes ended and where a shallow depression starting at the edge of the road ran across the open ground. Where the bushes ended the leopard had lain down for some time, changing his position several times, and eventually he had entered the depression and proceeded along it, stopping and lying down frequently. Thirty yards farther on the sand and dust that had been washed off the road into the depression ended and gave place to short grass. Here, from the particles of sand and dust adhering to the grass where the leopard had put his pads, it was reasonable to assume that he passed that way after the dew had started falling the previous evening, which would be at approximately 7 p.m. The grass in the depression extended for only a few yards and the light sand and dust beyond showed no pug marks, so it was evident the leopard had left the depression at this spot. Tracking on the open ground was not possible, but from where the leopard had left the depression I saw he had gone in the direction of a few coarse tufts of grass, a foot or two high. Going up to the tufts, I saw at a distance of about ten feet the deep imprints of a sambhar's hoofs. From here on for thirty yards, and at regular intervals, all four hoofs of the *sambhar* had bitten deep into the ground as would naturally happen if the *sambhar* was trying, by shock tactics, to dislodge

something from his back. At the end of the thirty yards the *sambhar* had turned to the left and dashed straight towards an isolated tree on the far side of the depression. On the bark of this tree, and at a height of about four feet, I found *sambhar* hairs and a small splash of blood.

I was now convinced that the leopard from his look-out on the hill had seen the *sambhar* feeding on the open ground, and after reconnoitring the position had set off to stalk it and, having sprung on its back from the cover of the tufts of grass, that he was now riding it until it took him to some sheltered spot where he could kill it and have the kill to himself. To have killed the *sambhar* where he caught it would have been easy but he could not have dragged a full-grown *sambhar* to cover— the hoof marks had shown me that the *sambhar* was full grown— and when daylight came he would have lost his kill, so he had wisely decided to ride it. Having failed to wipe the leopard off its back on the first tree the *sambhar* made three more attempts to get rid of his unwelcome rider before making for the main jungle two hundred yards away, where he evidently hoped that bushes would accomplish what the trees had failed to do. Twenty yards inside the bushes, and well screened from the prying eyes of human beings and vultures, the leopard had buried his teeth in the old*sambhar* hind's throat, and while holding on with his teeth and the claws of his fore-paws, had swung his body clear of the hind bringing her to the ground and, after killing her, had eaten his meal. The leopard was lying near his kill when I arrived and on seeing me moved off, but he had nothing to fear from me for I was out bird shooting and was armed with a 28-bore gun and No. 8 shot.

I know of many instances of leopards riding animals they intend to kill— *sambhar*, cheetal, and in one instance a horse— but I only know of one instance of a tiger having done so.

On that occasion I was camped near Mangolia Khatta, a cattle station twelve miles from Kaladhungi, and while I was having a late breakfast one morning I heard the distant boom of buffalo bells. Earlier in the morning, while returning to camp after taking a cinema picture of a leopard, I had passed through a herd of some hundred and fifty buffaloes that were grazing on a wide expanse of tarai grass through which ran a sandy nullah, with a

trickle of water in it. In this *nullah* I had seen the fresh pug marks of a tiger and a tigress. From the violent booming of the bells it was evident that the herd of buffaloes was stampeding back to the cattle station, and mingled with the sound of the bells was the bellowing of a single buffalo. The men at the cattle station, some ten in number, had now taken alarm and started to shout and to beat tin cans, whereon the buffalo stopped bellowing but the herd continued to stampede until it reached the station.

Shortly after all the noise had died down I heard two shots, and on going to the station to investigate I saw a young European with a gun in his hand and a ring of Indians standing round a buffalo that was stretched on the ground. The European told me that he was employed by the Indian Wood Products at Izatnagar and that he had been talking to the cattle men when they heard the distant booming of the buffalo bells. As the sound drew nearer they heard the bellowing of a buffalo and the angry roar of a tiger (I was farther away and so had not heard the tiger), and fearing that the tiger was coming to the station they had started shouting and beating tin cans. On the arrival of the herd one of the buffaloes was seen to be smothered in blood and on the cattle men saying that nothing could be done for it, he had asked for and obtained permission to shoot it and had put two bullets into its head to end its suffering.

The buffalo the young man had shot was young and in perfect condition, and the cattle men were probably right when they informed me it was one of the best in the herd. I had never seen an animal in the condition it presented, so I examined it very thoroughly.

On the buffalo's neck and throat there was not a single mark of tooth or claw, but on its back were fifty or more deep cuts made by a tiger's claws. Some of these claw marks had been made while the tiger was facing towards the buffalo's head, others had been made while it had been facing towards the buffalo's tail. While riding the maddened animal the tiger had torn off and eaten some five pounds of flesh from its withers, and some ten to fifteen pounds from its hind quarters.



Going back to my camp I armed myself with a heavy rifle and went down the trail the buffaloes had made, and found that the stampede had started on the far side of the *nullah* in which I had seen the tiger's pug marks. But the grass here was unfortunately shoulder high, so I was not able to reconstruct the scene or to find any clue as to how the tiger came to be on the back of a buffalo it had no intention of killing, as was evident from the absence of marks on the buffalo's neck and throat. This failure to reconstruct the scene I greatly regret, for apart from its being the only occasion on which I have been at fault, I believe no other instance of a tiger riding an animal and having a meal while doing so has ever been known.

The pug marks in the *nullah* showed that both tigers were full grown, so it was not a case of a young and inexperienced tiger trying its hand; and, further, no young tiger would have dared to approach a herd of buffaloes at ten o'clock in the morning, or, for the matter of that, at any hour.

## (2)

Evelyn Gill, son of my old friend Harry Gill, is one of the keenest butterfly collectors I know, and in a conversation I had with him while he was in Naini Tal on short leave I mentioned having seen on the Powalgarh road a butterfly with brilliant red spots on its upper wings. Evelyn said he had not seen a butterfly of this kind and he begged me to get him a specimen.

Some months later I was camped at Sandni Gaga, three miles from Powalgarh, trying to get a cinema picture of *cheetal* stags fighting, for at that time it was not unusual to see several battles between rival stags taking place at the same time on the Sandni Gaga plain. One morning after an early breakfast I set out with my butterfly net to try to get the specimen I had promised Evelyn. A hundred yards from my tent there was a forest road connecting Kaladhungi with Powalgarh, and in a hollow a mile along this road where there was a *sambhar* wallow I hoped to get the butterfly.

This forest road was little used by human beings and as there was an abundance of game in the forest through which it ran, an early morning

walk along it was of great interest, for on the road, which was of hard clay with a light film of dust on it, was a record of all the animals that had used or crossed it during the night. When looking at tracks on a road or game path, with a trained eye, it is not necessary to stop at each track to determine the species, size, movement, and so on of the animal or animals that have made the track, for these details are subconsciously noted. For instance, the porcupine that had come out on to the road, a little beyond where I joined the road after leaving my camp, had evidently taken fright at something in the jungle on the right of the road and had scurried back. The reason for his fright was apparent a few yards farther on, where a bear had crossed the road from right to left. On entering the jungle on the left the bear had disturbed a sounder of pig and a small herd of cheetal, for they had dashed across the road into the jungle on the right. A little farther on, a *sambhar* stag had come out from the right and after browsing on a bush had walked along the road for fifty yards, rubbed his antlers against a young sapling, and then gone back into the jungle. Near this spot a four-horned antelope, with a fawn at foot, had come on the road. The fawn, whose hoof-prints were no bigger than the finger nails of a child, had skipped about the road until the mother had taken fright, and after dashing down the road for a few yards mother and fawn had gone into the jungle. Here there was a bend in the road, and at the bend were the footprints of a hyaena who had come as far as this, and then turned and gone back the way it had come.

Reading the signs on the road and listening to the birds— Sandni Gaga in addition to being the most beautiful spot for a hundred miles round is noted for its bird life— I had covered half a mile when I came to a stretch of the road that had been cut out of the face of the hill. Here the surface was too hard to show normal tracks and I had gone a short distance along the road when my attention was arrested by an unusual mark. This was a little furrow three inches long and two inches deep where it started, and it was at right angles to the road. The furrow could have been made by a staff with an iron point, but no human being had been along the road for twenty-four hours and the furrow had been made within the past twelve hours. And again, if a human being had made it it would have been parallel with and not at right angles to the road, which at this point was fourteen feet wide with a more or less perpendicular bank some ten feet high on the right and a

steep slope on the left. The earth thrown out of the furrow showed that the object that had made it had travelled from right to left.

Having satisfied myself that the furrow had not been made by a human being, I came to the conclusion that the only other thing that could have made it was the pointed tip of a horn, either of a *cheetal* or of a youngsambhar. Had either of these deer jumped down the steep bank and made a bad landing, hard though the ground was the hoofs of the animal would have broken the surface and left a track, but there were no deer tracks anywhere near the furrow. The final conclusion that I arrived at, therefore— with the furrow as my only clue— was that it had been made by the horn of a dead deer, and made when a tiger had jumped down the bank with the deer in its mouth. That there were no drag marks on the road was not unusual, for whenever it is possible to do so both tigers and leopards when crossing a road with a kill lift the kill clear of the ground, and this I believe they do to avoid leaving a scent trail for bears, hyaenas, and jackals to follow.

To test the accuracy of my deductions I crossed the road and looked down the hill on the left of the road. No drag marks were to be seen, but on a bush twenty feet down the hill and at a height of about four feet I saw something glistening on a leaf in the morning sun; on going down to investigate I found this was a big drop of blood, not yet quite dry. From here on, tracking was easy, and fifty yards farther down under the shelter of a small tree and surrounded by thick bushes I found the kill, a *cheetal* stag with horns that many a sportsman would have prized as a good trophy. The tiger was taking no chances of his kill— from which he had eaten both hind quarters— being found by bird or beast, for he had scratched together the dry leaves and twigs for a considerable distance round, and had heaped them on the kill. When a tiger does this it is an indication that he is not lying up nearby to keep an eye on the kill.

I had been told by Fred Anderson and Huish Edye of a big tiger in this area which Mrs (now Lady) Anderson had christened the Bachelor of Powalgarh. I had long wished to see this famous tiger that all the sportsmen in the province were trying to bag, and which I knew lived in a deep ravine

that started near the *sambhar* wallow I was making for. As there were no pug marks near the kill by which I could identify the tiger that had killed the cheetal, it occurred to me that it was just possible that the kill was the property of the Bachelor and, if so, that there was now a reasonable chance of my having a look at this tiger to see if he was as big as he was reputed to be.

Starting from near the kill a narrow glade ran down to a small stream a hundred yards away. Beyond the stream was a dense patch of wild lime. If the Bachelor had not gone back to his ravine he would in all probability be lying up in this patch of cover, so I decided to try to get the tiger to return to his kill. Having come to this decision I went up towards the road and buried my white butterfly net under dead leaves. The glade at the upper end was about ten feet wide and the tree under which the kill was lying was about the same distance from the right-hand side of the glade. On the left-hand side, and nearly opposite the kill was the dead stump of a tree roofed over with creepers. First seeing that there were no holes in the dead stump to harbour snakes, I cleared away the dry leaves from the foot of the stump—to avoid sitting on scorpions—and then made myself comfortable with my back to the stump. From my seat I could see the kill, which was about thirty feet away, and I could also see down the glade to the stream, on the far side of which a troupe of red monkeys were feeding on the berries of a pipal tree.

When my preparations were completed, I gave the call of a leopard. Leopards will—when it is safe for them to do so—eat a tiger's kill, and of this tigers are very resentful. If the tiger was within hearing distance, and if my imitation was sufficiently good to deceive him, I expected him to come up the glade, and after I had had a good look at him I intended letting him know I was there and then make my getaway. The monkeys responded to my call by giving their alarm call, and three of them took up positions on a branch that jutted out from the pipal tree at right angles at a height of about forty feet above ground. The alarm call of the monkeys which, as they could not see me, only lasted for a minute or so was all to the good, for if the tiger was in the vicinity he would now be assured that a leopard was interfering with his kill. I kept my eye on the three monkeys, and presently I

saw one of them turn round, peer into the jungle behind him, bob his head up and down several times, and then he gave an alarm call. A minute later the other two started calling and were followed by several others farther up the tree. The tiger was coming, and I greatly regretted not having my camera with me for he would make a grand picture, walking up the glade with the sun glinting on the water of the stream and the pipal tree with the excited monkeys on it in the background.

As usually happens on these occasions, however, the tiger did not do what I expected. After a long pause, during which I had the uneasy feeling that the tiger was approaching his kill from behind me, I caught a fleeting glimpse of him as he sprang across the stream and disappeared into the thick jungle on the right-hand side of the glade. After reconnoitring the position from the bushes beyond the stream the tiger had evidently concluded that if he came up the glade the leopard would see him, so he had started out to stalk the kill where he evidently expected to find the leopard. As far as I was concerned there was no objection to his doing this, though it would mean his coming closer to me than I had intended letting him.

The ground was carpeted with dry leaves, and the tiger accomplished his stalk without my hearing a sound. I next saw him as he was standing looking down at his kill but, to my great unease, I found I was not looking at the Bachelor, but at a big tigress. At the best of times a tigress's temper cannot be relied on, and this was not one of those 'best of times', for I was sitting too close to her kill for my comfort, and , further it was quite possible that she had cubs in the lime thicket, in which case she would resent my presence near her kill. However, if she went bark the way she had come all would be well, but the tigress did not do this. After satisfying herself that the leopard had not touched her kill, she walked out on to the glade, halving the distance between us. For a long minute she stood undecided, while I held my breath and closed my eyes until I was looking through a slit, and then she quietly walked down the glade, lay down at the stream, had a drink, and then sprang across the stream and disappeared into the thick cover.

In both the incidents I have related in these stories I did not know, at the start, that a crime had been committed, and it is this uncertainty of not knowing what a small clue will lead up to that makes the compiling of jungle detective stories so interesting and so exciting.

Few can compile a detective story of fiction, but all can compile jungle detective stories provided they have eyes to more than the road they walk on, and provided also that they do not start with the assumption that they know all, before in fact they know anything.



## *Chapter Nine*

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WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS of age I was considered old enough to join the school cadet company of the Naini Tal Volunteer Rifles.

Volunteering was very popular and was taken very seriously in India in those days, and all able-bodied boys and men took pride and pleasure in joining the force. There were four cadet companies and one adult company in our battalion with a combined strength of 500 which, for a population of 6,000, meant that every one in twelve was a volunteer.

The Principal of our school of seventy boys was also captain of the school cadet company, which mustered fifty strong. The holder of these dual posts was an ex-army man and it was his burning, and very praiseworthy, ambition to have the best cadet company in the battalion and to satisfy this ambition we small boys suffered, and suffered greatly. Twice a week we drilled on the school playground, and once a week we drilled with the other four companies on the flats, an open stretch of ground at the upper end of the Naini Tal lake.

Our captain never missed, nor did he ever overlook a fault, and all mistakes made on the drill grounds were atoned for after evening school. Taking up a position four feet from his target and wielding a four-foot-long cane, the captain was a marksman of repute who had earned for himself the tide of 'Dead Eye Dick'. I do not know if he made private bets with himself, but we small boys laid wagers of marbles, tops, penknives, and even on occasions the biscuit that formed our breakfast, that nine times out of ten our captain could lay his cane along the most painful weal left on the hand by the previous day's or previous week's caning, and the boy—usually a newcomer—who betted against the odds always lost. The cadets of the other three companies hotly disputed our reputation of being the best drilled company but they did not dispute our claim of our being the best turned-out company. This claim was justified, for before being marched down to drill with the other companies we were subjected to an inspection

that detected the minutest particle of dirt under a finger-nail, or speck of dust on the uniform.

Our uniforms— passed down when grown out of— were of dark blue serge of a quality guaranteed to stand hard wear and to chafe every tender part of the skin they came in contact with, and, further, to show every speck of dust. Hot and uncommon as the uniform was it was surpassed in discomfort by the helmet that was worn with it. Made of some heavy compressed material, this instrument of torture was armed with a four-inch-long fluted metal spike, the threaded butt end of which projected down inside the helmet for an inch or more. To keep the threaded end from boring into the brain the inner band had to be lined with paper, and when the helmet had been fixed to the head like a vice it was held in that position by a heavy metal chin strap mounted on hard leather. After three hours in the hot sun few of us left the drill ground without a splitting headache which made repetition of lessons prepared the previous night difficult, with the result that the four-foot cane was used more freely on drill days than on any other.

On one of our drill days on the flats the battalion was inspected by a visiting officer of senior rank. After an hour of musketry drill and marching and counter-marching, the battalion was marched up to the Suka Tal (dry lake) rifle range. Here the cadet companies were made to sit down on the hillside while the adult company demonstrated to the visiting officer their prowess with the 450 Martini rifle. The battalion prided itself on having some of the best rifle shots in India in its ranks, and this pride was reflected in every member of the force. The target, standing on a masonry platform, was made of heavy sheet-iron and the experts could tell from the ring of the bullet on the iron sheet ether it had struck the centre of the target or the edge of it.

Each cadet company had its hero in the adult company, and adverse comments against the marksmanship of a selected hero would that morning have resulted in many sanguinary fights, had fighting in uniform not been frowned on. After the scores of the best shots had been announced, the cadets were ordered to fall in and march down from the five-hundred- to the



two-hundred-yard range. Here four senior cadets were selected from each company and we juniors were ordered to pile arms and sit down behind the firing point.

Inter-school competition in all forms of sport, and most of all on the rifle range, was very keen and every shot fired that morning by the four competing teams was eagerly watched and fiercely commented on by friend and foe alike. The scores ran close, for the best shots in each company had been selected by the respective company commanders, and there was great jubilation in our ranks when it was announced that our team had come out second in the competition and that we had been beaten by only one point by the school that had three times our membership.

While we—the rank and file—were commenting on the achievements of the recent competitors, the Sergeant-Major was seen to detach himself from the group of officers and instructors standing at the firing point, and come towards us bellowing in a voice that it was claimed could be heard a mile away, ‘Corbett, Cadet Corbett!’ Heavens! What had I done now that merited punishment? True I had said that the last shot that had put the rival company one point ahead of us had been a fluke, and someone had offered to fight me, but there had been no fight for I did not even know who the challenger was, and here now was that awful Sergeant-Major again bellowing, ‘Corbett, Cadet Corbett!’ ‘Go on.’ ‘He’s calling you.’ ‘Hurry up or you’ll catch it,’ was being said on all sides of me; and at last, in a very weak voice, I answered ‘Yes sir.’ ‘Why didn’t you answer? Where is your carbine?’

Fetch it at once,’ were rapped out at me all in one breath. Dazed by these commands I stood undecided until a push from behind by a friendly hand and an urgent ‘Go on you fool’ set me off at a run for my carbine.

On our arrival at the two-hundred-yard range those of us who were not competing had been made to pile arms, and my carbine had been used to lock one of the piles. In my effort now to release my carbine the whole pile of arms clattered to the ground and while I was trying to set the pile up again the Sergeant-Major yelled, ‘Leave those carbines you have mucked

up alone, and bring yours here.’ ‘Shoulder arms, right turn, quick march’ were the next orders I received. Feeling far worse than any lamb could possibly ever have felt I was led off to the firing point, the Sergeant-Major whispering over his shoulder as we started, ‘Don’t you dare disgrace me.’

At the firing point the visiting officer asked if I was the youngest cadet in the battalion, and on being told that I was, he said he would like to see me fire a few rounds. The way in which this was said— and the kindly smile that went with it— gave me the feeling that of all the officers and instructors who were standing round, the visiting officer was the only one who realized how alone, and how nervous, a small boy suddenly called upon to perform before a large and imposing gathering can feel.

The 450 Martini carbine the cadets were armed with had the most vicious kick of any small-arms weapon ever made, and the musketry course I had recently been put through had left my shoulder— which was not padded with overmuch flesh— very tender and very painful, and the knowledge that it would now be subjected to further kicks added to my nervousness. However, I would have to go through with it now, and suffer for being the youngest cadet. So on the command of the Sergeant-Major I lay clown, picked up one of the five rounds that had been laid down for me, loaded the carbine and raising it very gently to my shoulder took what aim I could and pressed the trigger. No welcome ring came to my anxious ears from the iron target, only a dull thud, and then a quiet voice said, ‘All right, Sergeant-Major, I will take over now,’ and the visiting officer, in his spotless uniform, came and lay down beside me on the oily drugget. ‘Let me have a look at your carbine,’ he said, and when I passed it over to him a steady hand carefully adjusted the back-sight to two hundred yards, a detail I had omitted to attend to. The carbine was then handed back to me with the injunction to take my time, and each of the following four shots brought a ring from the target. Patting me on the shoulder the visiting officer got to his feet and asked what score I had made and on being told that I had made ten, out of a possible twenty with the first shot a miss he said, ‘Splendid. Very good shooting indeed,’ and as he turned to speak to the officers and instructors I went back to my companions, walking on air. But my elation was short lived, for I was greeted with, ‘Rotten shot.’ ‘Disgraced the

Company.’ ‘Could have done better with my eyes closed.’ ‘Crums, did you see that first shot, went and hit the hundred-yard firing point.’ Boys are like that. They just speak their minds without any thought or intention of being cruel or unkind.

The visiting officer who befriended me that day on the Suka Tal rifle range when I was feeling lonely and nervous, later became the nation’s hero and ended his career as Field-Marshal Earl Roberts. When I have been tempted, as many times I have been, to hurry over a shot or over a decision, the memory of that quiet voice telling me to take my time has restrained me and I have never ceased being grateful to the great soldier who gave me that advice.

The Sergeant-Major who for many years ruled the Naini Tal Volunteers with a rod of iron, was short and fat with a neck like a bull’s and a heart of gold. After our last drill on the flats that term he asked me if I would like to have a rifle. Surprise and delight rendered me speechless; however, no reply appeared to be expected, and he went on to say, ‘Come and see me before you leave for the holidays and I will give you a service rifle and all the ammunition you want, provided you promise to keep the rifle clean, and to return me the empties.’

So that winter I went down to Kaladhungi armed with a rifle, and without any anxiety about ammunition. The rifle the good Sergeant-Major had selected for me was dead accurate, and though a 450 rifle firing a heavy bullet may not have been the best type of weapon for a boy to train on, it served my purpose. The bow and arrow had enabled me to penetrate farther into the jungles than the catapult, and the muzzle-loader had enabled me to penetrate farther than the bow and arrow; and now, armed with a rifle, the jungles were open to me to wander in wherever I chose to go.

Fear stimulates the senses of animals, keeps them ‘on their toes’, and adds zest to the joy of life; fear can do the same for human beings. Fear had taught me to move noiselessly, to climb trees, to pin-point sound; and now, in order to penetrate into the deepest recesses of the jungle and enjoy the

best in nature, it was essential to learn how to use my eyes, and how to use my rifle.

A human being has a field of vision of 180 degrees, and when in a jungle in which all forms of life are to be met with, including poisonous snakes and animals that have been wounded by others, it is necessary to train the eyes to cover the entire field of vision. Movements straight in front are easy to detect and easy to deal with, but movements at the edge of the field of vision are vague and indistinct and it is these vague and indistinct movements that can be most dangerous, and are most to be feared. Nothing in the jungle is deliberately aggressive, but circumstances may arise to make some creature so, and it is against the possibility of these chance happenings that the eye must be trained. On one occasion the darting in and out of the forked tongue of a cobra in a hollow tree, and on another occasion the moving of the tip of the tail of a wounded leopard lying behind a bush, warned me just in time that the cobra was on the point of striking and the leopard on the point of springing. On both these occasions I had been looking straight in front, and the movements had taken place at the extreme edge of my field of vision.

The muzzle-loader had taught me to economize ammunition and now, when I had a rifle, I considered it wasteful to practise on a fixed target, so I practised on jungle-fowl and on peafowl, and I can recall only one instance of having spoilt a bird for the table. I never grudged the time spent, or the trouble taken, in stalking a bird and getting a shot, and when I attained sufficient accuracy with the rifle to place the heavy 450 bullet exactly where I wanted to, I gained confidence to hunt in those areas of the jungle into which I previously been too frightened to go.

One of these areas, known to the family as the Farm Yard, was a dense patch of tree and scrub jungle several miles in extent, and reputed to be 'crawling' with jungle-fowl and tigers. Crawling was not an overstatement as far as the jungle-fowl were concerned, for nowhere have I seen these birds in greater numbers than in those days in the Farm Yard. The Kota-Kaladhungi road runs for a part of its length through the Farm Yard and it

was on this road that the old *dak* runner, some years later, told me he had seen the pug marks of the 'Bachelor of Powalgarh'.

I had skirted round the Farm Yard in the bow-and-arrow and muzzle-loader days, but it was not until I was armed with the 450 that I was able to muster sufficient courage to explore this dense tree and scrub jungle. Through the jungle ran a deep and narrow ravine, and up this ravine I was going one evening intent on shooting a bird for the pot, or a pig for our villagers, when I heard jungle-fowl scratching among the dead leaves in the jungle to my right. Climbing on to a rock in the ravine I sat down, and on cautiously raising my head above the bank saw some twenty to thirty jungle-fowl feeding towards me, led by an old cock in full plumage. Selecting the cock for my target, I was waiting with finger on trigger for his head to come in line with a tree— I never fired at a bird until I had a solid background for the bullet to go into— when I heard a heavy animal on the left of the ravine and on turning my head I saw a big leopard bounding down the hill straight towards me. The Kota road here ran across the hill, two hundred yards above me, and quite evidently the leopard had taken fright at something on the road and was now making for shelter as fast as he could go. The jungle-fowl had also seen the leopard and as they rose with a great flutter of wings, I slewed round on the rock to face the leopard. Failing in the general confusion to see my movement the leopard came straight on, pulling up when he arrived at the very edge of the ravine.

The ravine here was about fifteen feet wide with steep banks twelve feet high on the left, and eight feet high on the right. Near the right bank, and two feet lower than it, was the rock on which I was sitting; the leopard was, therefore, a little above, and the width of the ravine from me. When he pulled up at the edge of the ravine he turned his head to look back the way he had come, thus giving me an opportunity of raising the rifle to my shoulder without the movement being seen by him. Taking careful aim at his chest I pressed the trigger just as he was turning his head to look in my direction. A cloud of smoke from the black-powder cartridge obscured my view and I only caught a fleeting glimpse of the leopard as he passed over my head and landed on the bank behind me, leaving splashes of blood on the rock on which I was sitting, and on my clothes.

With perfect confidence in the rifle, and in my ability to put a bullet exactly where I wanted to, I had counted on killing the leopard outright and was greedyly disconcerted now to find that I had only wounded him. That the leopard was badly wounded I could see from the blood, but I lacked the experience to know— from the position of the wound, and the blood— whether the wound was likely to prove fatal or not. Fearing that if I did not follow him immediately he might get away into some inaccessible cave or thicket where it would be impossible for me to find him, I reloaded the rifle and stepping from my rock on to the bank, set off to follow the blood trail.

For a hundred yards the ground was flat, with a few scattered trees and bushes, and beyond this it fell steeply away for fifty yards before again flattening out. On this steep hillside there were many bushes and big rocks, behind any one of which the leopard might have been sheltering. Moving with the utmost caution, and scanning every foot of ground, I had gone half-way down the hillside when from behind a rock, some twenty yards away, I saw the leopard's tail and one hind leg projecting. Not knowing whether the leopard was alive or dead I stood stock still until presently the leg was withdrawn, leaving only the tail visible. The leopard was alive and to get a shot at him I would have to move either to the right or to the left. Having already hit the leopard in the body, and not killed him, I now decided to try his head, so inch by inch I crept to the left until his head came into view. He was lying with his back to the rock, looking away from me. I had not made a sound but the leopard appeared to sense that I was near, and as he was turning his head to look at me I put a bullet into his ear. The range was short, and I had taken my time, and I knew now that the leopard was dead, so going up to him I caught him by the tail and pulled him away from the blood in which he was lying.

It is not possible for me to describe my feelings as I stood looking down at my first leopard. My hands had been steady from the moment I first saw him bounding down the steep hillside and until I pulled him aside to prevent the blood from staining his skin. But now, not only my hands but my whole body was trembling: trembling with fear at the thought of what would have happened if, instead of landing on the bank behind me, the leopard had landed on my head. Trembling with joy at the beautiful animal I had shot,

and trembling most of all with anticipation of the pleasure I would have in carrying the news of my great success to those at home who I knew would be as pleased and as proud of my achievement as I was. I could have screamed, shouted, danced, and sung, all at one and the same time. But I did none of these things, I only stood and trembled, for my feelings were too intense to be given expression in the jungle, and could only be relieved by being shared with others.

I had no idea how heavy a leopard was, but I was determined to carry my leopard home; so, laying the rifle down, I ran back to the ravine where there was a bauhinia creeper, and stripping off sufficient of the inner bark to make a strong rope, I returned and tied the fore and the hind legs of the leopard together. Then squatting down I got the legs across my shoulders but found I could not stand up, so I dragged the leopard on to the rock and again tried and found I could not lift it. Realizing that the leopard would have to be left, I hastily broke some branches and, covering it up, set off on my three-mile run for home. There was great excitement and great rejoicing in the home when I arrived with the news that I had shot a leopard, and within a few minutes Maggie and I, accompanied by two hefty servants, were on our way to the Farm Yard to bring home my first leopard.

It is fortunate that Providence does not exact retribution for the mistakes of beginners or my first encounter with a leopard would probably have been my last, for I made the mistake of shooting at that first leopard when it was above and within springing distance of me, without knowing where to hit it to kill it outright. My total bag of animals up to that date was one cheetal—shot with the muzzle-loader— and three pigs and one kakar, shot with the 450 rifle. The pigs and the *kakar* I killed stone dead, and I thought I could also kill the leopard stone dead by shooting it in the chest, and there I made my mistake. For I learnt subsequently that though a leopard can be killed stone dead, it is seldom possible to do this by shooting it in the chest.

When a leopard receives a body wound that does not kill it outright or disable it, it springs wildly, and though leopards never attack deliberately immediately on being shot at, there is always a risk of their making accidental contact with the sportsman, especially when they are above and

within springing distance, and this risk is increased when the wounded animal is not aware of the position of its assailant. That the leopard in his wild spring landed on the bank behind me and not on my head was my good fortune, for not knowing where I was he might have made accidental contact with me, which would have been just as unpleasant as a deliberate attack.

As an example of how uncertain a chest shot is, I will relate another experience I had with a leopard I shot in the chest. Maggie and I were camped one winter at Mangolia Khatta, a cattle station to which the animals of our village were sent when grazing in the Kaladhungi jungles became scarce. One morning while we were having breakfast the barking of a herd of *cheetal* apprised me of the fact that one of their number had been killed by a leopard. I had gone to Mangolia Khatta to try to shoot a leopard that was taking toll of our cows, and as there appeared to be a chance of getting a shot at the leopard now, I left Maggie to finish her breakfast and, picking up a 275 rifle, set off to investigate.

The deer were calling four hundred yards due west of us, but to get to them I had to make a detour to avoid an impenetrable canebrake and swampy ground. Approaching the calling animals from the south, with the wind in my face, I saw some fifty stags and hinds standing on an open patch of burnt ground and looking in the direction of the canebrake. On the swampy ground between the canebrake and the open ground there was a belt of grass some two hundred yards wide, and from the open ground, and at a distance of sixty yards from me, a leopard was attempting to drag a *cheetal* stag towards this belt of grass. It was not possible to approach any nearer to the leopard without being seen by the herd of cheetal, who would have warned the leopard of my presence, so I sat down and raising my rifle waited for the leopard to give me a shot.

The stag was big and heavy and the leopard was having great difficulty in dragging it over the rough ground, and presently it released its hold and stood up facing me. A leopard's white chest, flecked with black, is a perfect target for an accurate rifle at sixty yards, and when I pressed the trigger I knew I had put the bullet where I wanted to. On receiving my shot the



leopard sprang high into the air, and landing on all fours, dashed into the belt of grass. Going to the spot where the leopard had been standing I saw a blood trail leading to the grass, which here was about waist-high. Breaking some branches off a nearby tree, I covered up the stag to prevent vultures getting at it, for the stag was in velvet and in prime condition and I knew our men would be glad to have it. Returning to camp I finished my breakfast and then, accompanied by four of our tenants, went back to recover the stag and to follow up the wounded leopard. As we approached the spot from where I had fired, one of the men touched me on the shoulder and pointed to our right front, where the burnt ground ended and the belt of grass began. After a little while I saw what he was pointing at. It was a leopard, two hundred and fifty yards away, standing near the edge of the belt of grass.

Our tenants, when in camp with us stoutly refuse to accept any payment for their services, but when out in the jungles we compete among ourselves to see who will be the first to spot a shootable animal, and when I lose they accept with great glee the rupee I pay as forfeit. When I had paid my forfeit to the two men who claimed to have seen the leopard at the same time, I told them to sit down for the leopard had now turned and was coming in our direction. Quite evidently this was the mate of the one I had wounded and, attracted to the spot as I had been, was coming to see what its mate had killed. A hundred yards from us a tongue of grass extended for a few yards on to the open ground, and on reaching this spot— from where the leopard could see the kill— it stopped for several minutes, offering me a shot at its chest, but as I already had one leopard with a chest wound on my hands I held my fire.

The leopard was very suspicious of the branches I had heaped on the kill; however, after a careful look all round, it cautiously approached the kill and as it stood broadside on to me I put a bullet into it an inch or two behind the left shoulder. It fell at my shot and did not move again and on going up to it I found it was dead. Telling the men to tie it to the bamboo pole they had brought and carry it to camp and return for the stag, I set out on the very unpleasant task of following up a wounded leopard in waist-high grass.

The unwritten law that a wounded animal must be recovered at all costs is accepted by all sportsmen and— where carnivora are concerned— each individual has his own method of accomplishing this end. Those who have the command of elephants find the task an easy one, but those like myself who shoot on foot have to learn by experience the best method of putting wounded carnivora out of their suffering, and avoiding injury while doing so. Burning a jungle to recover a wounded animal is, in my opinion, both cruel and wasteful, for if the animal is able to move the chances are that it will get away to die, maybe days or weeks later, and if it is too badly wounded to move there is a certainty of its being roasted alive.

It is not possible to follow the blood trail of carnivora in high grass with any degree of safety, and the method I adopted on the occasions on which I retrieved wounded carnivora in grass was to ignore the blood trail and to proceed inch by inch in the direction in which the animal had gone, hoping for the best while prepared for the worst. On hearing the slightest sound a wounded animal will either charge or betray its position by some movement. If a charge does not materialize and the looked-for movement is observed, a stone or a billet of wood, or even a hat, can be usefully used and the animal dealt with when it charges at the thrown object. This method can only be adopted when there is no wind to rustle the grass, and when the sportsman has had some experience of shooting in grass, for though wounded carnivora are very vocal when disturbed they keep close to the ground and seldom show themselves until the last moment.

There was no wind of any account that day at Mangolia Khatta, and after leaving my men I followed the blood trail over the burnt ground to where it entered the grass. Satisfying myself that my rifle was loaded and that it was working smoothly I stepped very cautiously into the grass, and as I did so I heard a whistle behind me and on looking round saw my men beckoning to me. On my rejoining them they pointed to three bullet holes they had found in the dead leopard while tying it to the bamboo pole. One was the bullet hole behind the left shoulder that had killed the leopard; of the other two, one was in the centre of the chest, while the other— an exit hole— was two inches from the root of the tail.

The leopard, I very greatly regret to say, had a reason for returning to its kill, and when I found what this reason was I consumed with remorse. Leopard cubs can fend for themselves at a very young age by catching small birds, rats, mice, and frogs, and I can only hope that the cubs of the gallant mother, who after being wounded, risked her life to procure food for her young, were old enough to fend for themselves, for all my efforts to find them failed.

My statement that before entering the grass to follow up the wounded leopard, I satisfied myself that my rifle was loaded and working smoothly, will appear unusual to sportsmen in view of the fact that I had a minute previously walked up to a leopard I had just shot, and presumably I had not done so with an empty rifle without knowing whether the leopard was alive or dead. What necessity then was there for me to satisfy myself that my rifle was loaded? I will tell why I did so, not only on this occasion but on every occasion on which my life has depended on my rifle being loaded. Fortunately I learnt my lesson when I was comparatively young, and to this I attribute the fact that I have lived to tell the tale.

Shortly after starting work at Mokameh Ghat, of which I told in My India, I invited two friends to shoot with me at Kaladhungi. Both men, Silver and Mann, had recently arrived in India and had never fired a shot in the jungles. The morning after their arrival I took them out, and two miles along the Haldwani road I heard a leopard killing a *cheetal* in the jungle to the right of the road. Knowing it would not be possible for my friends to stalk the leopard, I decided to put one of them up on a tree over the kill, and told them to draw lots. Silver was armed with a .500 D.B. rifle which he had borrowed, while Mann was armed with a 400 S.B. black-powder rifle, also borrowed. I was armed with a .275 magazine rifle. As Silver was a little older, and better armed than Mann, Mann very sportingly declined to draw, and the three of us set off to find the kill. The cheetal, a fine stag, was still twitching when we found it, and selecting a tree for Silver to sit on I left Mann to help him up, while I moved the leopard away to prevent it seeing Silver climbing the tree. The leopard was very hungry and disinclined to move; however, by zigzagging in front of him I drove him away and then returned to the kill. Silver had never before climbed a tree

and was looking very unhappy, and I am not sure that I cheered him by remarking that the leopard was a big male, and cautioning him to be very careful over his shot. Then telling him that he would only have to wait a matter of five minutes, I took Mann away.

A hundred yards from the kill there was a fire track that met the Haldwani road at right angles. Going through the jungles to this track, Mann and I had only proceeded a short distance along it when Silver fired two shots in quick succession, and as we turned round to retrace our steps we saw the leopard dashing across the track. Silver did not know whether he had hit the leopard or not, but on going to the spot where Mann and I had seen it crossing the track we found a blood trail. Telling my companions to sit on the track and wait for me, I set off alone to deal with the leopard. There was nothing heroic in this, quite the contrary in fact, for when following wounded carnivore it is necessary to concentrate attention on the matter in hand and it is difficult to do this when accompanied by companions with fingers on the triggers of cocked rifles. When I had gone a short distance Silver came after me and offered to accompany me, and when I declined his offer he begged me to take his rifle, saying he would never forgive himself if the leopard attacked me and I was unable to defend myself with my light rifle. So, to please him, we exchanged rifles. As Silver walked back to the fire track I set off for the second time, but before doing so I uncocked his rifle and opened the breach sufficiently to see that there were two cartridges in the chambers.

The ground for a hundred yards was comparatively open, and then the blood trail led into heavy cover. As I approached this cover I heard the leopard moving in front of me, and for a second I thought it was on the point of charging. The sound was not repeated, however, so very cautiously I entered the cover and twenty yards farther on found where the leopard had been lying, and from where he had got up when I heard him. It was now a case of moving step by step and I was thankful, when a hundred and fifty yards farther on, the trail led out on to more open ground. There I was able to move faster and I had covered another hundred yards when, on approaching a big haldu tree, I caught sight of the tip of the leopard's tail projecting from the right-hand side of the tree. Finding he was followed the

leopard had quite evidently taken up what he considered would be the best position for his charge, and that he would charge I had no doubt whatever.

Deciding it would be to my advantage to meet a head-on charge, I moved to the left of the tree. As the leopard's head came into view I saw he was lying flat down, facing me, with his chin resting on his outstretched paws. His eyes were open, and the tips of his ears and his whiskers were trembling. The leopard should have sprung at me the moment I appeared round the tree, and that he had not done so made me hold my fire, for it had not been my intention to blow his head off at a range of a few feet, but to put a bullet into his body and so avoid ruining Silver's trophy. As I continued to stare at him his eyes closed and I realized that he was dead, that in fact he had died as I was watching him. To make sure I was right I coughed and as there was no response, I picked up a stone and hit him on the head.

Silver and Mann came up at my call and before handing Silver's rifle back to him I opened the breach and extracted the two brass cartridges, and, to my horror, found that both were empty. Many sportsmen have suffered through pulling the triggers of empty rifles, and had I not been slowed down while following the blood trail through heavy cover, I would have added to the number. From the day I learnt my lesson, fortunately without injury to myself, I have never approached dangerous ground without satisfying myself that the weapon I am carrying is loaded. If I am carrying a double-barrelled rifle I change the cartridges from one chamber to the other, and if I am carrying a single-barrelled rifle I eject the cartridge, see that the bolt is working smoothly, and then replace the cartridge in the chamber.



## *Chapter Ten*

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**K**UNWAR SINGH, OF WHOM I wrote in *My India*, had a great aversion to shooting in the jungles near Kaladhungi, which he said were full of ground creepers which made it difficult to run away from zealous forest guards and angry tigers, and for this reason he confined all his poaching activities to the Garuppu jungles. Good woodsman and good shot though he was, and greatly as I admired him, Kunwar Singh was not a super-sportsman and this I attribute to the fact that the jungles in which he did his shooting were teeming with game. Knowing every game-path and every glade and open stretch of ground on which deer were to be found, his method of approach was to stride through the jungles without any attempt at silence, and if he disturbed the deer in one glade he would say it did not matter for there were sure to be more in the next glade. Nevertheless I learnt many things from Kunwar Singh for which I have never ceased to be grateful, and I am also grateful to him for having helped me to overcome some of my fears of the unknown. One of these fears concerned forest fires. Having heard of the danger of forest fires and seen the effect of them in our jungles, I carried the fear in the back of my mind that I would one day be caught by a forest fire and roasted alive, and it was Kunwar Singh who dispelled this fear.

In village areas in the Kumaon foothills every one is interested in his neighbour's affairs or doings, and to people who never see a daily paper and whose lives are, more or less, circumscribed by the forest that surrounds their village or group of villages, every scrap of news is of interest and is eagerly passed on, losing nothing in repetition. It was not surprising, therefore, for Kunwar Singh to have heard about my shooting of the leopard in the Farm Yard almost before the animal had time to cool, and being the sportsman he was he lost no time in coming to congratulate me. He knew about the rifle the Sergeant-Major had lent me, but until I shot the leopard I do not think he had any faith in my ability to use it. Now, however, with this concrete evidence before him he evinced a great interest in me and in the

rifle, and before he left me that day I had promised to meet him at 5 o'clock on the following morning at the fourth milestone on the Garuppu road.

It was pitch dark when Maggie brewed a cup of tea for me, and with an hour in hand I set off to keep my appointment with Kunwar Singh. I had walked that lonely forest road on many occasions and the dark held no terror for me, and as I approached the fourth milestone I saw the glimmer of a fire under a tree by the side of the road. Kunwar Singh had arrived before me and as I sat down near his fire to warm my hands he said, 'Oh look, you have come away in such a hurry that you have forgotten to put on your trousers.' I tried, with little success, to convince Kunwar Singh that I had not forgotten to don my trousers but that I was wearing— for the first time — a new style of nether garment called shorts. For though he confined himself to saying that jangias (panties) were not suitable for the jungles, his look implied that I was indecently clothed and that he would be hanged if he would be seen with me in public. After this bad start the atmosphere did not clear until a jungle-cock started crowing in a near-by tree, on hearing which Kunwar Singh got to his feet, put out the fire, and said it was time to be going for we still had a long way to go.

The jungle was awakening as we left our tree and stepped out on the road. The jungle-cock who, awakened by our fire, had crowed his welcome to the coming day had set a sound wave in motion and each bird, big and small, as it roused from slumber added its voice to the growing volume of sound. Though our jungle-cock is the first bird to rub the sleep from his eyes, he is not the first to descend to the ground. The privilege of catching the early worm is claimed by the Himalayan whistling-thrush, better known as the whistling-schoolboy. While walking through the Kumaon jungles in the half-light between day and night, or night and day, a bird will flit by on silent wings pouring out a stream of golden song which once heard will never be forgotten. The songster is the whistling schoolboy bidding the closing day good night, or welcoming the new-born day. Morning and evening he pours out his song while in flight, and during the day he sits for hours in a leafy tree whistling in a soft sweet minor key a song that has no beginning and no end. Next to greet the coming light is the racket-tailed drongo and a minute later he is followed by the peafowl. No one may sleep

after the peafowl has given his piercing call from the topmost branch of the giant *samal* tree and now, as night dies and daylight comes, a thousand throbbing throats in nature's orchestra fill the jungle with an ever-growing volume of melody.

And not only the birds, but the animals also, are on the move. A small herd of *cheetal* has crossed the road in front of us, and two hundred yards farther on a *sambhar* hind and her young one are cropping the short grass by the side of the road. A tiger now calls to the east and all the peafowl within hearing distance scream in unison. Kunwar Singh is of opinion that the tiger is the flight of four bullets from us, and that it is in the sandy *nullah* in which he and Har Singh met with their experience which so nearly had a fatal ending. The tiger quite evidently is returning home from a kill and is indifferent as to who sees him. First a kakar, then twosambhar, and now a herd of *cheetal* are warning the jungle folk of his presence. We reach Garuppu as the sun is touching the treetops, and crossing the wooden bridge and disturbing fifty or more jungle-fowl that are feeding on the open ground near the ruined staging buildings we take a footpath which leads us through a narrow belt of scrub jungle to the bed of the dry watercourse spanned by the bridge we have just crossed. This watercourse, which is dry except in the heavy monsoon rains, is a highway for all the animals that quench their thirst at the crystal clear spring which rises in its bed three miles farther down. In later years the watercourse became one of my favourite hunting grounds for rifle and camera, for it ran through country which abounded with game, and a human track on its sandy bed was as much a matter for speculation as Friday's footprint on Crusoe's island.

For half a mile the watercourse runs through scrub jungle before entering a strip of nal grass a quarter of a mile wide and many miles long. Nal grass is hollow, jointed like bamboo, grows to a height of fourteen feet, and when accessible to villages is extensively used for hut building. When the jungles round Garuppu are burnt by our villagers, to get grazing for their cattle, all the game in the vicinity take shelter in the nal grass which, because it grows on damp ground, remains green all the year round. During exceptionally dry years, however, the nal grass occasionally catches fire, and when this happens a terrifying conflagration results, for the grass is matted together



with creepers and each joint of the nal, as it heats up bursts with a report resembling a pistol shot, and when millions of joints are exploding at the same time the resulting noise is deafening and can be heard for a mile or more.

As Kunwar Singh and I walked down the watercourse that morning I could see a black cloud of smoke rising high into the sky, and presently the distant roar and crackle of a great fire came to my ears. The watercourse here ran due south and the fire, which was on the eastern or left bank, was being driven towards it by a strong wind. Kunwar Singh was leading and, remarking over his shoulder that the nal was burning for the first time in ten years, he kept straight on, and on turning a corner we came in sight of the fire, which was about a hundred yards from the watercourse. Great sheets of flame were curling up into the cloud of black smoke on the edge of which hundreds of starlings, minas, rollers, and drongos were feeding on the winged insects that were being caught up by the hot current of air and whirled high into the sky. Many of the insects that escaped capture by the birds in the air were landing on the sandy bed of the watercourse where they were being pounced on by peafowl, jungle-fowl, and black partridge. Among these game-birds a herd of some twenty *cheetal* were picking up the big red fleshy flowers the high wind was dislodging from a giant *samal* tree.

This was the first forest fire I had ever seen, and I attribute the fear it engendered in me to the fact that most human beings are frightened of the unknown. And then, on rounding the corner and coming in sight of the birds and the animals that were unconcernedly feeding in the vicinity of the fire, I realized that I alone was terrified and that there was no reason, other than ignorance, for my being so. Coming down the watercourse in the wake of Kunwar Singh I had been tempted to turn and run away, and had only been restrained from doing so by the fear of being thought a coward by Kunwar Singh. Now, standing on the sandy bed of the fifty-yard-wide watercourse with the roar of the approaching fire growing louder and louder while black clouds of smoke billowed overhead— waiting for a shootable animal to be driven out of the narrowing belt of nal grass— my terror left me, never to return. The heat from the fire could now be felt in the watercourse, and as

the deer, peafowl, jungle-fowl, and black partridge climbed the right bank and disappeared into the jungle, we turned and retraced our steps to Garuppu and made for home.

In later years grass-fires provided me with many exciting experiences. Before relating one of these it is necessary for me to state that we who cultivate land at the foot of the Himalayas are permitted, by Government, to burn the grass in unprotected forests to get grazing for our cattle. There are several varieties of grass in these forests and as they do not all dry off at the same time the burning is staggered and, starting in February, ends in June. Throughout this period fires can be seen on the grasslands and anyone passing a patch of grass that he considers is dry enough to burn, is at liberty to put a match to it.

I had been shooting black partridge with Wyndham at Bindukhera in the Tarai, and early one morning Bahadur— an old friend who for thirty years has been headman of our village— and I set out on our twenty-five-mile walk to our home at Kaladhungi. We had covered about ten miles over ground on which most of the grass had been burnt but where there were still a few isolated patches of unburnt grass when, as we approached one of these patches, an animal came out on the cart track we were on, and for a long minute stood broadside on to us. The morning sun was shining on it and from its colouring and size we took it to be a tiger. When, however, it crossed the cart track and entered the grass we saw from the length of its tail that it was a leopard. ‘Sahib,’ said Bahadur regretfully, ‘it is a pity that the Commissioner Sahib and his elephants are ten miles away, for that is the biggest leopard in the Tarai, and it is worth shooting.’ That the leopard was worth shooting there was no question, and even though Wyndham and his elephants were ten miles away, I decided to have a try, for the leopard had come from the direction of a cattle station, and the fact that he was moving about in the open at that hour of the day was proof that he was coming from a kill he had made overnight at this station. When I outlined my plan— to burn the leopard out— to Bahadur, he expressed his willingness to help, but was doubtful of its success. The first thing to do was to find out how big the patch of grass was, so leaving the cart track we circled round it and found it

was some ten acres in extent and cone shaped, with the cart track running along the base.

The wind was right for my plan, so going to the farthest point of the grass, which was about two hundred yards from the cart track, I cut two tufts of grass and lighting them sent Bahadur to set fire to the grass on the right, while I set fire to it on the left. It was of the variety known as elephant grass, some twelve feet in height, and as dry as tinder, and within a minute of our setting it alight it was burning fiercely. Running back to the cart track I lay down on it and putting my rifle, a .275 Rigby, to my shoulder I took a sight along the outer edge of the track at a height that would put my bullet in the leopard's body when he tried to dash across it. I was lying ten yards from the grass, and the point where the leopard had entered it was fifty yards from me. The track was ten feet wide and my only hope of hitting the leopard was to press the trigger the moment I caught sight of him, for I was convinced he would cross the track at the last moment, and cross it at speed. There was no possibility of injury to Bahadur for I had instructed him to climb a tree, well clear of the track, after he had set a short stretch of the grass on fire.

Half the grass had been burnt and the roar from the fire was like an express train going over a trestle bridge, when I saw a bare human foot near my right shoulder. On looking up I found a man standing near me who, from his appearance and dress, I knew was a Mahomedan cartman probably out looking for a lost bullock. Reaching up I pulled the man down and yelled into his ear to lie still beside me, and to ensure his doing so I threw a leg across him. On came the fire and when only some twenty-five yards of grass remained to be burnt the leopard streaked across the track and as I pressed the trigger I saw its tail go up. The grass on the left-hand side of the track had been burnt some days previously, and the forest of burnt stalks into which the leopard had disappeared made it impossible for me to see what the result of my shot had been. Reassured, however, by the way the leopard's tail had gone up that he was fatally wounded, I sprang up, took a firm grip of the man's hand, jerked him to his feet, and ran with him down the cart track through a dense cloud of smoke with the flames of the oncoming fire curling dangerously over our heads. Not until we were right

over him did we see the leopard, and without losing a moment— for the heat here was terrific— I stooped down and putting the man's hand on the leopard's tail closed my hand over his and as we pulled the leopard round to drag it away from the fire the animal, to my horror, opened its mouth and snarled at us. Fortunately for us my bullet had gone through its neck and paralysed it, and by the time we had dragged it fifty yards to safety it was dead. As I released my hold on the man's hand he sprang away from me as though I had bitten him, and grabbing the pugree off his head ran with it trailing behind him as no cartman had ever run before.

I regret I was not present when my friend arrived at whatever destination he was making for. Indians are past masters at recounting tales, and my friend's tale of his escape from the clutches of a mad Englishman would have been worth listening to. Bahadur had witnessed the whole occurrence from his perch on the tree and when he rejoined me he said, ' That man will be very popular at camp-fires for many years to come, but no one will believe his story.'

When conditions are not favourable for walking up so-called dangerous animals and shooting them on foot, the method most generally employed is to beat them out of cover with the help of elephants or men, or a combination of the two. Three of these beats stand out in my memory as being worthy of record, if for no other reason than that two were carried out with the minimum of manpower, while the third provided me with an experience that makes my heart miss a beat or two every time I think of it.

### *First Beat*

Robin— our springer spaniel— and I were out for a walk one morning on the fire track half a mile to the west of the Boar bridge. Robin was leading, and on coming to a spot where there was short grass on the little-used track he stopped, smelt the grass, and then turned his head and looked at me. On going up to him I could see no tracks, so I signalled to him to follow the scent he had found. Very deliberately he turned to the left and, on reaching the edge of the track, ran his nose up and down a blade of grass and then with a quick glance round at me, as if to say, 'It's all right, I was not

mistaken', stepped into the grass which here was about eighteen inches high. Foot by foot he followed the scent and a hundred yards farther on, where there was a little depression with damp earth in it, I saw he was trailing a tiger. On the far side of the depression Robin intently examined a blade of grass, and on stooping down I saw he had found a spot of blood. From experiences I have had with animals left wounded in the jungles by others I am very suspicious of any blood I find on a tiger track. However, on this occasion it was all right for the blood was quite fresh, and no shots had been fired in this direction that morning, so I concluded the tiger was carrying a kill, possibly a cheetal, or maybe a big pig. A few yards farther on there was a dense patch of clerodendron some fifty yards square, on reaching which Robin stopped and looked round at me for further instructions.

I recognized the tiger from his pug marks on the damp earth. He was a big tiger who had taken up his residence in the heavy scrub jungle on the far side of the Boar river and who, since our descent from the hills three months previously, had given me a lot of anxiety. The two roads and the fire track on which Maggie and I were accustomed to take our morning and evening walks ran through this jungle, and on several occasions when I was away from home Maggie and Robin had encountered the tiger while out for a walk. On each succeeding occasion the tiger had shown less inclination to give way to them and the stage had been reached when Robin no longer considered it was safe for Maggie to walk on these roads, and flatly refused to accompany her beyond the bridge. Fearing that some day there might be an accident I had decided to take the first opportunity that offered to shoot the tiger, and now— provided the tiger was lying up with his kill in the patch of clerodendron— the opportunity I had been waiting for had come. Robin had trailed the tiger down wind, so making a wide detour I approached the clerodendron from the opposite side. When we were thirty yards away Robin halted, raised his head into the wind, jerked his muzzle up and down a few times, and then looked round at me. Good enough. The tiger was there all right, so we regained the fire track and made for home.

After breakfast I sent for Bahadur, told him about the tiger, and asked him to fetch two of our tenants, Dhanban and Dharmanand, both of whom

could be relied on to carry out instructions, and both of whom were as expert at tree climbing as Bahadur and myself. By midday the three men had eaten their food and forgathered at our cottage, and after seeing that they had nothing in their pockets that would rattle I made them remove their shoes and arming myself with a 450/400 rifle, we set off. On the way I outlined my plans for the beat I intended the three men to carry out. The men knew the jungle as well as I did and when I told them where the tiger was lying up, and what I wanted them to do, they were full of enthusiasm. My plan was to put the men up on trees on three sides of the patch of clerodendron, to stir the tiger up while I guarded the fourth side. Bahadur was to be on the central tree and on receiving a signal from me, which would be the call of a leopard, he was to tap a branch and if the tiger tried to break out on either side the man nearest to it was to clap his hands. The essence of the whole enterprise was silence, for the three men would be within thirty or forty yards of the tiger and the slightest sound while approaching their trees, climbing them, or while waiting for my signal, would ruin the plan.

On reaching the spot where Robin had picked up the tiger's scent I made Dhanban and Dharmanand sit down, while I took Bahadur and put him up a tree twenty yards from the clerodendron, and opposite where I intended taking my stand. Then one by one I took the other two men and put them up in trees to Bahadur's right and left. All three men were in sight of each other, and all three overlooked the patch of clerodendron and would, therefore, be able to see any movement the tiger made, but they would be screened from me by a belt of trees. After the last man was safely on his tree, without a sound having been made, I went back to the fire track and going a hundred yards up it met— at right angles— another fire track that skirted the foot of a long low hill. This second fire track bordered the patch of clerodendron on its fourth side. Opposite the tree on which Bahadur was sitting, a narrow and shallow ravine ran up the side of the hill. The ravine was much used by game and I felt sure the tiger on being disturbed would make for it. On the right-hand side of the ravine, and ten yards up the hill, there was a big *jamun* tree. When planning the beat I had intended sitting on this tree and shooting the tiger as he went up the ravine past me. But now, on reaching the tree, I found I could not climb it with the heavy rifle in my

hands and as there were no other trees nearby I decided to sit on the ground. So, clearing the dry leaves from the root, I sat down with my back to the tree.

I had two reasons for giving the call of a leopard. One, a signal to Bahadur to start tapping a branch with the dry stick I had left with him: the other, to reassure the tiger that it was safe for him to cross the fire track, and to disarm any suspicion he may have had that he was being driven towards danger. When I was comfortably seated on the ground I pushed up the safety catch and putting the rifle to my shoulder, gave the call of a leopard. A few seconds later Bahadur started tapping with his stick and he had only tapped a few times when the bushes parted and a magnificent tiger stepped out on the fire track and came to a stand. For ten years I had been trying to get a cine-photograph of a tiger, and though I had seen tigers on many occasions I had not succeeded in getting one satisfactory picture. And now out in the open, twenty yards from me with not a leaf nor a blade of grass between us, and the sun shining on his beautifully marked winter coat, was a tiger that I would have gone anywhere and given anything to photograph. I have on occasions stalked an animal, maybe for hours or maybe for days, and on getting up to it raised my rifle and after taking careful aim lowered it, and then attracting the animal's attention flourished my hat, giving myself the pleasure of seeing it bound away unhurt. I would very gladly have treated this tiger in the same way, but I did not feel that I would be justified in doing so. Apart from consideration of Maggie, Sher Singh and other small boys grazed their cattle in this jungle, and the women and children of the village collected dry sticks in it, and though the tiger had not harmed man or beast his method of demonstrating was very terrifying and might easily result in an accident.

After stepping out on the fire track the tiger stood for a minute or two looking to his right and to his left, and over his shoulder in the direction of Bahadur. Then very leisurely he crossed the track and started up the hill on the left-hand side of the ravine. My sights had been on him from the time his head parted the clerodendron bushes, and when he was level with me I pressed the trigger. I do not think he so much as heard my shot, and as his legs folded up under him he slid backwards and came to rest near my feet.

## *Beat No. 2*

When His Highness the Maharaja of Jind died— full of years and loved by all who knew him— India lost one of her finest sportsmen. Ruler of a territory of 1,299 square miles with a population of 324,700 and a princely rent-roll, the Maharaja was one of the most unassuming men it has been my good fortune to meet. His hobbies were training gun-dogs and tiger shooting, and at both these sports he had few equals. When I first knew him he had four hundred dogs in his kennels and to see him schooling young dogs, and later handling them in the field, was a lesson in patience and gentleness that I never tired of watching. Only once did I ever hear the Maharaja raise his voice, or use a whip, to a dog. At dinner that night when the Maharani asked if the dogs had behaved themselves the Maharaja said, 'No, Sandy was very disobedient and I had to give him a good thrashing.'

The Maharaja and I had been out bird shooting that day. A long strip of grass and bush jungle was being beaten towards us by a line of elephants and men. At the end of the strip was an open stretch of ground some fifty yards wide. The Maharaja and I were standing a few yards apart at the farther edge of the open ground, with short grass behind us. Sitting in a row to the Maharaja's left were three young Labradors, Sandy golden coloured, the other two black. The line put up a black partridge and the Maharaja dropped it on the open ground and sent one of the black dogs to retrieve it. Next a jungle-fowl came low over my head and I dropped it in the grass behind me. The second black dog retrieved this bird. Some peafowl now got up, but having heard the shots in front, broke away to the left and passed out of range. A hare then broke cover and checking at the Maharaja, who had turned round to speak to a servant behind him, turned at right angles and passed in front of me. Waiting until it was at extreme range—for it is not advisable to break game more than can be helped when young dogs are in the field—I fired, and the hare turned about and passing in front of both of us collapsed thirty yards to the right of the Maharaja. As it went over Sandy shot forward. 'Sandy ,Sandy,' shouted the Maharaja, but Sandy was listening to no one. His two companions had retrieved their birds and it was his turn now and nothing was going to stop him. In his stride he picked up the hare and racing back handed it to me. Returning to his master Sandy



sat down in his allotted place, and was ordered to fetch the hare. Picking it up from where I had laid it down he trotted towards the Maharaja with it held high, and was waved away, farther, farther, to the right, still farther, until he reached the spot from where he had originally retrieved it. Here he was told to drop it and signalled to return. With drooping tail and hanging ears Sandy returned to his master a second time, and one of the other dogs was sent out to bring in the hare. When this had been done the Maharaja handed his gun to his servant, and taking a whip from him, caught Sandy by the scruff of his neck and gave him 'a good thrashing'. And a good thrashing it was but not for Sandy, for he was not touched, but for the ground on either side of him. When the Maharaja told his wife of Sandy's delinquency and the chastisement he had administered, I took a tablet from an attendant behind me—for the Maharaja was afflicted with total deafness—and wrote on it, 'Though Sandy Bahadur disobeyed you today he is the best dog in India, and will win the championship at the next gun-dog trials.' Later that year I received a telegram from the Maharaja which read, 'You were quite right. Sandy has won the Open Championship.'

The days were lengthening and the sun was getting hot, so making a very early start one morning I walked ten miles and arrived at the Maharaja's camp at Mohan as the family were sitting down to breakfast. 'You have come at a very opportune time,' said the Maharaja as I took a seat at his table, 'for today we are going to beat for the old tiger that has eluded us for three years.' I had heard this tiger discussed on many occasions and knew how keen the Maharaja was to outwit and shoot it. When, therefore, he offered me the best of the three machans that had been put up for the beat, and the loan of a rifle, I declined his offer and said I would prefer to be a spectator. At ten o'clock the Maharaja and Maharani, their two daughters and a girl friend and I motored down the road up which I had walked earlier that morning, to where the beat was waiting for us.

The ground to be beaten was a valley running deep into the foothills, with a small stream winding through it, and flanked on either side by hills three hundred feet high. At its lower end, where the road crossed it, the valley was about fifty yards wide, and half a mile farther up it again narrowed to fifty yards. Between these two points the valley widened out to

three or four hundred yards and here, where there was a dense patch of cover several hundred acres in extent, the tiger was thought to be lying up with the buffalo he had killed the previous night. At the upper end of the valley a small spur ran down from the hill on the right, and on a tree on this spur, a *machan* had been built which commanded the valley and the lower slopes of the hills on either side. Beyond the spur and on the far side of the stream, which here turned at right angles, two other *machans* had been put up on trees thirty yards apart.

Leaving our cars on the road we proceeded up the valley on foot, and guided by the head *shikari* and the secretary in charge of the beat, skirted to the left of the cover in which the tiger was said to be lying. When the Maharaja and his gun-bearer had taken their seats on the *machan* on the spur, the four ladies and I crossed the stream and occupied the two *machans* on the far side of it. The head *shikari* and the secretary then left us, and returned to the road to start the beat.

The *machan* I was on, with the two princesses, was a solidly-built affair laid with a thick carpet, with silk cushions to sit on. Accustomed only to sitting on hard branches, the luxury of the *machan*— following on an early rise and a long walk— made me drowsy and I was on the point of falling asleep when I was roused to full wakefulness by the distant sound of a bugle; the beat had started. Taking part in the beat were ten elephants, the Secretaries, A.D.C.s, household staff of the Maharaja, the head *shikari* and his assistants, and two hundred men collected from the surrounding villages. The heavy cover on the floor of the valley was to be beaten by the elephants on which the Secretaries and others were mounted, while the two hundred men beat the slopes on either side. Some of these beaters were to form a line on the two ridges and walk ahead of the beat to prevent the tiger from breaking out.

All the arrangements for the beat, and the beat itself, were intensely interesting for me for I was witnessing as a spectator an event in which I had hitherto always been an actor. There was nothing in the arrangements or in the conduct of the beat that could be found fault with. The time of day had been well chosen; we had been led to our *machans* in perfect silence;

and that the cover was being well beaten was evident from the number of birds, including *kalege* pheasants, jungle-fowl, and peafowl, that the line was putting up. Beats are always exciting, for from the moment the distant shouting of the men is heard, the tiger can be expected to be on the move. The Maharaja was handicapped by deafness but he had a good man with him, and presently I saw this man pointing to the right. After looking in this direction for a moment or two the Maharaja shook his head, and a little later a *sambhar* stag crossed the stream and on winding the Maharaja dashed past us up the valley.

The line of men on the ridge on the left was now visible, and the time had come for the tiger to appear. On came the beat with every man taking part in it shouting and clapping his hands, and every yard they advanced my hopes of the Maharaja shooting the tiger on which he had set his heart diminished, for no bird or animal had given an alarm-call. My young companions on the *machan* were keyed up, and the Maharaja was holding his rifle ready, for if the tiger appeared now he would have to take a quick shot. But rifles were of no use today, for the tiger was not in the beat. Ladders were produced and a very dejected party climbed down from the machans and joined an even more dejected staff on the ground. No one engaged in the beat had seen anything of the tiger, and no one knew what had gone wrong. But that something had gone wrong was evident, for shortly before our arrival in the cars the tiger had been heard calling in the valley. I had a suspicion that I knew why the beat had miscarried but, as I was only a spectator, I said nothing. After a picnic lunch we returned to camp, and while the others rested I went off and had a grand evening's fishing on the Kosi, for it was the latter end of April and the fishing was at its best.

During and after dinner that night, the abortive beat of the day and five previous unsuccessful beats for the same tiger was discussed in minute detail and a reason sought for their failure. On the first occasion on which a beat had been organized in the valley for this particular tiger, he had come out on the right of the *machan* and the Maharaja, taking an awkward shot from a fixed seat, had missed him. In the succeeding beats, carried out over a period of three years, the tiger had not again been seen, though he was

known to have been in the valley before the beats started. While the others had been talking and writing on tablets for the Maharaja's benefit, I had been thinking. The Maharaja was a good sportsman, and if I could help him to shoot the tiger on which he had set his heart it was up to me to try. A mistake had been made that day in taking the Maharaja's party to the machans, past the spot where the tiger was thought to be lying up, but this mistake was not responsible for the failure of the beat, for the tiger had left the valley at about the time the Maharaja's party had entered it. The single alarm-call of a kakar, heard shortly after we had left our cars, was all the foundation I had for my suspicion that the tiger walked out of the valley as we walked into it. Later when it became evident that an empty jungle had been beaten, I looked round to see if there was any other way for the tiger to leave the valley without passing the machans. Starting on the ridge behind the machans a landslide extended right down into the valley. The *kakar* had called at the upper end of this landslide and if there was a game track here running down to the cover in which the tiger had his kill, then it was quite possible that he left the valley by this track every time he heard preparations being made for a beat.

The plan that had been forming in my mind while the others talked was to put the Maharaja on the ridge, where the *kakar* had called, and beat the tiger up to him. Beating a second time for the tiger on the following day had been vetoed by every one, on the ground that as the tiger had not been found on a fresh kill there was no hope of finding him on a stale one. So even if my plan failed no harm would be done, for no arrangements had been made for the following day. Taking a tablet from one of the secretaries I wrote on it, 'If you can be ready at 5 a.m. tomorrow, I should like to do a one-man beat for the tiger we failed to get today', and handed the paper to the Maharaja. After reading what I had written the Maharaja passed the paper to his secretary, and from hand to hand it went round the room. I expected opposition from the staff, and it came now. However, as the Maharaja was willing to fall in with my plans, the staff reluctantly agreed to all conventions being set aside, and to the Maharaja going out with me next morning accompanied only by two gun-bearers.

Punctually at 5 a.m. the Maharaja, his two gun-bearers, and I, left the camp by car and motored three miles down the road to where an elephant, carrying a small machan, was waiting for us. Transferring the Maharaja and his two men to the elephant I set out on foot to guide the elephant through several miles of forest in which I had never been before. Fortunately I have a sense of direction, and though it was dark when we started I was able to steer a more or less straight course, and as the sun was rising we arrived on the ridge where the landslide started. Here I was delighted to find a well-used game-track leading up from the valley, and on a tree near the track I put up the machan. When the Maharaja and one gun bearer had taken their seats on the *machan* I sent the elephant away, and taking the other gun-bearer with me, put him up on a tree farther along the ridge. These preparations completed, I set off to do a one-man beat.

The way down into the valley was terribly steep and rough but as I was not hampered with a rifle, I accomplished descent safely. Passing the machans we had sat on the previous day, I went down the valley on silent feet, and two hundred yards beyond the heavy cover in which I suspected the tiger was lying, I turned and retraced my steps, talking to myself in a low voice as I did so. Where the tiger dragged the buffalo into the heavy cover there was a fallen tree. Lighting a cigarette I sat down on this tree, to listen if the jungle had anything to tell me. All remained quiet, so after coughing a few times and drumming my heels against the hollow tree I set out to find the kill and see if the tiger had returned to it. I found the kill tucked away under some thick bushes and was delighted to see that the tiger had eaten a meal only a few minutes previously and that the ground on which he had been lying was still warm. Running back to the hollow tree I hammered on it with a stone and shouted at the top of my voice, to let the man with the Maharaja know that the tiger was coming. A minute or two later a rifle shot rang out above me, and when I got to the ridge I found the Maharaja standing on the game track, looking at the fine tiger he had shot.

In the palace at Jind, now occupied by the Maharaja's eldest son, there is a skin with a label which reads, 'Jim's Tiger'. And in the late Maharaja's game-book there is an entry giving the date and place, and the circumstances in which the old tiger was shot.

### *Beat No. 3*

It was the last day of a memorable shoot. Memorable not only for us who had been privileged to take part in it, but also for the administrators of the country, for a Viceroy had for the first time in the history of India left the beaten track to spend a few days in the Kaladhungi jungles.

No individual's movements were more strictly ruled by precedents than the movements of the Viceroy of India, and any deviation from the beaten track was a contingency that had never been contemplated, and for which no provision had been made. When, therefore, Lord Linlithgow, shortly after assuming the Viceroyalty of India, decided to leave the track his predecessors had followed and blaze a track for himself, it was only natural that his decision should have caused consternation throughout the land. Custom decreed that the ruler of India should tour the southern provinces of his domain during the ten days hiatus between the closing of his Legislative Offices in Delhi and their reopening in Simla, and it was Lord Linlithgow's decision not to conform with this age-old custom that caused the long to be remembered flutter in the government dovecotes.

I, a mere man in the street without any connexion with Government, was happily ignorant of the working of wheels within wheels of the administration when one day, towards the end of March, as I was setting out from our cottage at Kaladhungi to catch a fish for our dinner, Ram Singh, whose duty it was to fetch our daily post from the Post Office two miles away, came running back with a telegram which he said the Postmaster had informed him was very urgent. The telegram, which had been redirected from Naini Tal, was from Hugh Stable, Military Secretary to the Viceroy. It informed me that the Viceroy's visit to South India had been cancelled, and asked if I could suggest any place where the Viceroy could spend ten days, with the possibility of getting a little shooting before proceeding to Simla for the summer. The telegram concluded with a request for an early reply, as time was short, and the matter urgent. Ram Singh does not speak English but having served us for thirty years he can understand it, and having stood round finding odd jobs to do while I read the telegram to Maggie, he now said he would hurry up and have his food and be ready in a few minutes to

take my reply to Haldwani. Haldwani— our nearest telegraph and telephone office— is fourteen miles from Kaladhungi and by sending my reply by Ram Singh, instead of by the regular *dak* runner, I would save a matter of some twenty-four hours. After Ram Singh had left with my reply to Hugh Stable which read, ‘Please call me on Haldwani telephone at eleven hours tomorrow’, I picked up my rod for the second time, for one can do a lot of thinking while fishing and I had much to think about, and, further, I still had our dinner to catch. Hugh Stable’s telegram was quite clearly in the nature of an SOS, and the question I had to decide was, what could I do to help him?

Going up the Kota road for two miles I cut across the lower end of the Farm Yard— where when a small boy I shot my first leopard— and made for a pool in the river in which a three-pound *mahseer* with whom I was acquainted lived. As I approached the pool I saw in the sand the pug marks of a tiger that had crossed the river early that morning. At the head of the pool, where the water runs fast and deep, there are three big rocks a foot above water which are continually wet with spray and in consequence as slippery as ice. Leopards use these rocks as stepping stones and one day I saw the tiger, whose pug marks were now on the sand, trying to do the same. I had chased the tiger that day for a mile without his knowing I was after him and twice I got to within shooting range, and on both occasions held my fire as I was not sure of killing him outright. And then as I saw he was making for the river I just kept him in sight for I knew I would get the shot I wanted when he was fording the river. As he approached the river it became evident that he intended crossing it dryshod by way of the stepping stones, and not wading it as I at first thought he intended doing. This suited me admirably for there was a twenty-foot drop on our side down which the tiger would have to go before reaching the river, and as he went over the edge to climb down I ran forward and lay down on the top of the bank above him.

The three rocks were at a distance apart that an Olympian athlete could, if he had a good run, have taken in a hop, skip, and jump, and which I had seen leopards do in three graceful bounds. The tiger had just accomplished the first jump safely as I poked my head over the edge, but he bungled the

second jump, and as his feet shot off the slippery rock he went heels over head into the deep and broken water. The noise from the water prevented my hearing what he said, but I could guess what it was for I had myself slipped on that self-same rock while trying to cross the river dryshod. On the far side of the broken water there is a short beach of dry sand. Floundering out on to this beach the tiger shook himself and then lay down and rolled over and over, drying his beautiful rich winter coat in the hot sand. Then getting to his feet he shook himself for a second time and walked quietly away to whatever place he was making for, without let or hindrance from me, for in the jungle it is not considered cricket to molest an animal that has provided entertainment. And now the pug marks of the tiger were showing on the sand again, but this time he had essayed the stepping stones safely for his feet when he crossed the sand had been dry.

Below the stepping stones a rock jutted out from the far bank making a backwater which was my friend the three-pounder's favourite hunting ground. Twice before a Jock Scott cast on the sloping rock and gently drawn off, had brought the *mahseer* out with a rush. The throw was a long and a difficult one, for the branch of a tree hung low over the backwater and the rod had to be used from a crouching position, for mahseer who have enemies on land, in the air, and in the water, are keen of sight and need a careful approach. Leaving the sandy beach, with the pug marks on it, I went upstream for a short distance, and while the ten-foot tapered cast I made that morning from carefully selected lengths of gut was soaking under a stone, put my rod together and had a smoke. When all was ready I pulled what I considered to be the exact length of line off the reel, and holding it carefully looped in my left hand crept down to the one spot from where it was possible to make a sideways cast on to the rock, for the bank behind did not permit of an orthodox cast. The new No. 8 Jock Scott put on in honour of the three-pounder landed exactly where I wanted it to, and as the drag of the line drew it off the rock into deep water, there was a swirl and a splash and for the third time my friend was well and truly hooked. It is not possible, when using light tackle, to stop the first mad rush of a mahseer, but by using just the right amount of strain he can be guided away from any snag he is making for, provided the snag is not on the same side of the river as the angler. I was fishing from the right bank and thirty yards below



where I had hooked the fish a curved root jutted out into the water. On the two previous occasions the fish had broken me on this root, but I managed to steer him clear of it now with only a few inches to spare. Once he was in the pool, he was safe, and after letting him play himself out I drew him to the sandy beach and landed him by hand, for I had brought no landing net with me. My estimate of three pounds was half a pound out, on the right side, so not only would he furnish us with a dinner, but he would also provide a meal for a sick boy Maggie was nursing in the village, who loved fish above all other things.

Having followed the advice given me on the rifle range when I was a boy, by sending Hugh Stable a non-committal telegram, I had given myself ample time to think, and to what extent my seeing the pug marks of the tiger and my success with the *mahseer* influenced my decision I cannot say; anyway, by the time I got home I had decided to tell Hugh Stable that Kaladhungi was the only place I could suggest for the Viceroy's holiday. Maggie had tea ready on the veranda and while we were talking over the decision I had come to, Bahadur arrived. Bahadur can keep his mouth shut when there is any necessity to do so, so I told him about the telegram I had received from Delhi. Bahadur's eyes literally dance when he is excited, and I have never seen them dance as they did that day. A possibility of the Viceroy coming to Kaladhungi! Why, such a thing had never before been heard of. A great bandobast would have to be made and fortunately it was just the right time of the year to make it, for the crops had been harvested and every man in the village would be available. Later, when it became known that the Viceroy was coming to our jungles, not only our own tenants but every man in Kaladhungi was as excited and as pleased as Bahadur had been when he heard the news. Not because of any profit or preferment they hoped to derive from the visit, but simply and solely because of their desire to help in their own humble way to make the visit a success.

It was dark when I started on my fourteen-mile walk to Haldwani next morning, for I wanted to see Geoff Hopkins, who was camped at Fatehpur, before my conversation with Hugh Stable. The road runs through jungle for the first seven miles and at that hour of the morning the jungle folk and I

had it to ourselves. A mile beyond the Kaladhungi bazaar it started to get light and in the dust of the road I saw the fresh pug marks of a male leopard, going in the same direction as I was. Presently on rounding a bend in the road, I saw the leopard two hundred yards ahead of me. He seemed to sense my presence for I had hardly rounded the bend when he turned his head and looked at me. However, he kept to the road, occasionally looking over his shoulder, and when I had reduced the distance between us to fifty yards, he stepped off the road into a light patch of grass. Keeping steadily on and looking straight ahead, out of the corner of my eye I saw him crouched down in the grass a few feet from the road. A hundred yards along when I looked over my shoulder I saw he was back on the road. To him I was just a wayfarer for whom he had made way, and a few hundred yards farther on he left the road and entered a deep ravine. For a mile I had the road to myself, and then out of the jungle on the right trotted five red dogs. Fleet of foot, and fearless; flitting through the forests as silent and free as a butterfly, and when hungry, eating only of the best. Of all the animals I know none has a better life, than the Indian red dog.

Geoff and Zillah Hopkins were sitting down to an early breakfast when I reached the forest bungalow, and were as pleased and excited as they could be when I told them of the errand on which I was going to Haldwani. Geoff was at that time Special Forest Officer, Tarai and Bhabar Government Estates, and without his help and co-operation I could make no concrete suggestions to Hugh Stable. Geoff rose nobly to the occasion. For the success of the shoot it was essential for me to have two shooting blocks in his forests. Both the blocks I wanted were fortunately available at the time, and Geoff said he would reserve them for me. He also very kindly offered me the Dachauri block in the adjoining government forest, which he had reserved for himself. Everything, from seeing the pug marks of the tiger in the sand, the catching of the mahseer, and now my successful visit to Geoff, was going splendidly, and I never felt the miles as they passed under my feet as I completed my journey to Haldwani.

Hugh Stable was on the telephone punctually at eleven o'clock and for the next hour we carried on an uninterrupted conversation, over the three-hundred-mile-long line. In that hour Hugh learnt that there was a small

village at the foothills of the Himalayas called Kaladhungi; that this village was surrounded by jungles in which there was a variety of game; that I knew of no place in India where a more pleasant holiday could be spent. From Hugh I learnt that the Viceregal party would consist of Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Linlithgow, and their three daughters, the Ladies Anne, Joan, and Doreen (Bunty) Hope. With the party would come H.E.'s personal staff, for even when on holiday the Viceroy of India does a full day's work. Finally I learnt I had only fifteen days in which to make all my preparations for the shoot. Mouse Maxwell, the Controller of the Viceroy's Household, motored from Delhi to Kaladhungi the following day, and he was followed by the head of the Police, the head of the C.I.D., the head of the Civil Administration, the head of the Forest Department, and by many other heads. But most terrifying of all by a Guardsman who informed me he was bringing a company of soldiers to Kaladhungi to guard the person of the Viceroy.

Bahadur had been right when he said a great bandobast would have to be made, but how great that bandobast would have to be neither he nor I had dreamed. However, with the whole-hearted help and co-operation of all concerned everything had progressed smoothly and well, without a single hitch or set-back. Four beats had been successfully carried out and four tigers had been cleanly shot, with the minimum expenditure of ammunition, by people who had never before seen tigers in the wilds. Only those who have taken part in tiger beats will know how great an achievement this had been. And now the last day of that memorable shoot had come with only one, the youngest, member of the party left to shoot a tiger. The beat that day was to take place on a semicircular bit of ground which in bygone years had been the bed of the Boar river, but which now is clothed with dense tree and scrub jungle interspersed with small patches of nal grass, and thickets of wild oranges. Five machans had been built in trees on what at one time had been the bank of the river, and the tiger was to be beaten off the low ground towards these machans.

Making a wide detour, for many beats are ruined by taking the guns to their machans past the cover in which the tiger is assumed to be lying up, I brought the party up from behind the machans and while the stops, who had

accompanied us, fanned out to right and left to take up position on the trees I had previously marked for them, Peter Borwick (one of H.E.'s A.D.C.s), Bahadur, and I, started to put the guns in position. On No. 1 *machan* I put Anne, and on No. 2 *machan* I put H.E. No. 3 *machan* had been built in the only tree available at this spot, a stunted kart bair (wood plum) tree. It had been my intention to put Bahadur on this *machan* to act as a stop. On being stopped I expected the tiger to turn to the left, and for this reason I had selected No. 4 *machan* for Bunty, the only member of the party who had not shot a tiger.

Coming from the direction of the cover, in which I knew the tiger was lying up, a game-track ran up the bank and passed right under No. 3 *machan*. I was certain the tiger would come along this track and as the *machan* was only six feet above ground I had decided that, though it would be quite safe to put an experienced stop on it, it would be too dangerous for a gun. Now, however, as the two girls, Peter, Bahadur, and I, reached the *machan* and Bahadur started to climb on to it, on the spur of the moment I changed my plans. Putting my hand on the *machan*, which was on a level with my head, I whispered to Bunty that I wanted her to sit on it with Peter to keep her company. This— after I had pointed out the danger— she consented to do without a moment's hesitation. I then begged her not to shoot at the tiger until it reached a spot on the track that I would mark, and to take very careful aim at its throat. Bunty promised to do both of these things, so Peter and I lifted her on to the *machan*. After I had given Peter a leg up I handed him my 450/400 D.B. rifle, a similar weapon to the one Bunty was armed with. (Peter was unarmed, for he was to have accompanied me in the beat.) Then going down the bank I walked up the game-track, and when within twenty feet of the *machan*, laid a dry stick across the track and as I did so I looked up at Bunty and she nodded her head.

Lady Joan, Bahadur, and I, now went to the tree on which No. 4 *machan* had been built. This *machan* was twenty feet above ground and from it to No. 3 *machan*— thirty yards away— there was a clear and uninterrupted view. When I climbed the ladder after Joan to hand her rifle, I begged her not to allow the tiger to reach No. 3 *machan* if Bunty and Peter failed to

stop it. 'I will do my best,' she said, adding, 'don't you worry.' There were no bushes and only a few scattered trees on this part of the bank, and the tiger would be in full view of these two machans from the time it left the cover sixty yards away until it was, I hoped, shot dead by Bunty. Putting Bahadur on No. 5 machan, to act as a stop if necessary, I circled outside the beat and came out on to the Boar river.

The sixteen elephants that were to do the beating were collected a quarter of a mile down the river, near the pool in which I caught the mahseer. They were in charge of old Mohan, a friend of many years standing, who for thirty years had been Wyndham's head shikari, and who knew more about tigers than any man in India. Mohan was on the look-out for me, and on seeing me come out of the jungle and wave my hat he started the elephants up the bed of the river. Sixteen elephants walking in line over boulder-strewn ground take some time to cover a quarter of a mile, and while I sat on a rock and smoked I had ample time to think, and the more I thought the more uneasy I became. For the first time in my life I was endangering the life of one, and quite possibly two, human beings, and the fact that it was the first time gave me little comfort. Before his arrival in Kaladhungi Lord Linlithgow asked me to draw up a set of rules. These rules had been scrupulously obeyed, and with over three hundred people in camp, and daily excursions to near and distant shooting and fishing grounds, no one had received so much as a scratch. And now on this last day I, whom everyone trusted, had done a thing that I was bitterly regretting. On a frail machan, only six feet above ground, and on which I would not have trusted any man of my acquaintance, I had put a young girl little more than sixteen years of age to shoot a tiger as it came straight towards her, the most dangerous shot that one can take at a tiger. Both Bunty and Peter were as brave as tigers, as was abundantly evident by the fact that after I had pointed out the danger to them they had unhesitatingly taken their seats on the machan. But bravery alone without accuracy of aim would not be sufficient, and of their ability to hold a rifle straight I had no knowledge. Mohan arrived with the elephants while I was still undecided whether to call off the beat or go on with it, and when I told him what I had done he drew in his breath—the Indian equivalent to the Western whistle—closed

his eyes tight and on reopening them said, 'Don't ghabrao (worry) Sahib. Everything will be all right.'

Calling the mahouts together I told them it was very essential for us to move the tiger without frightening it, and that after lining-out on the river bank they would take their signal from me. When they saw me take my hat off and wave it they would give one shout, after which they would clap their hands and continue to clap them until I replaced the hat on my head. This procedure would be repeated at short intervals and if it failed to move the tiger I would give the signal to advance, and the advance would be made in silence and dead slow. Our initial shout would serve a double purpose, it would rouse the tiger from his sleep, and it would alert the guns.

A strip of jungle three hundred yards wide and five hundred yards long was to be beaten, and when the elephants had lined-out on either side of me I took off my hat and waved it. After giving one lusty shout the men started clapping their hands and after they had clapped for three or four minutes, I replaced my hat. There were sambhar, cheetal, kakar, peafowl, and jungle-fowl in that area, and I listened anxiously for an alarm-call, but heard none. Five minutes later I again took off my hat and waved it and a minute, or it may have been two, later, a rifle shot rang out and I started to count the seconds, for much can be learnt by the spacing of shots in a tiger beat. One, two, three, four, five, I counted and I was beginning to breathe again when two shots rang out in quick succession. Again one, two, three, four, and a fourth shot rang out. The first and the fourth shot had been fired when the muzzle of the rifle was facing in my direction. When the other two shots were fired the muzzle had been facing away from me. This could mean only one thing, that there had been trouble and that Joan had had to help, for the *machan* H.E. was on was not within sight of Bunty's *machan*.

With my heart racing and fears assailing me that I was too frightened to give expression to, I handed over the line to Mohan to bring up and told Ajmat, the *mahout* of the elephant I was on, to go as fast as he could straight to where the shots had been fired. Ajmat, who has been trained by Wyndham, is absolutely fearless and the best man on an elephant I have ever known. And his elephant is as well trained and as fearless as he is.

Straight through thorn bushes, over big rocks and broken ground, and under overhanging branches we went, my uneasy thoughts racing ahead of us. And then as we crashed into a patch of twelve-foot-high nalgrass the elephant hesitated before going on again, and Ajmat leant back and whispered, 'She can smell the tiger, so hold tight Sahib, for you are unarmed.' Only another hundred yards to go now, and as yet no signal had come from the guns, each of whom had been provided with a railwayman's whistle with instructions to blow it if help was needed. But the fact that no whistle had sounded gave me no comfort for I knew from past experience that in times of excitement even bigger things than whistles can be dropped from a machan. And then through the trees I caught sight of Joan and could have shouted with joy and relief, for she was unconcernedly sitting on her *machan* with her rifle across her knees. On seeing me she spread her arms wide—which I rightly interpreted as meaning a big tiger—and then pointed down in front of Bunty's machan.

The rest of the story, which makes my heart miss a beat as I relate it even after this lapse of fifteen years, is soon told; a story which, but for the courage of three young people and superlative marksmanship, would have ended in a terrible tragedy.

Our shout when I started the beat was clearly heard by the guns, also the faint clapping of our hands. Then in the interval the tiger broke cover sixty yards in front of *machan* No. 3, and came slowly along the game-track. It reached the foot of the bank as we on the elephants shouted the second time. On hearing this shout the tiger stopped and looked over its shoulder. Satisfied that there was no need to hurry, it stood listening for a minute or so, and then started up the bank. When it reached the spot where I had laid a dry stick across the track, Bunty fired, but she fired at its chest, for the tiger was holding its head low and she could not see its throat. On receiving the shot, which was well placed, and before either Bunty or Peter was able to get in a second shot, the tiger sprang forward with a roar and attacked the *machan* from underneath. While the frailmachan was rocking on the stunted tree and threatening to disintegrate under the onslaught of the tiger, and while Bunty and Peter were trying desperately to push the muzzles of their rifles through the floor of themachan, Joan, from her *machan* thirty yards

away, knocked the tiger down with her first shot and as it fell to the ground put a second bullet into it. On receiving Joan's second bullet the tiger started to go down the bank, evidently with the intention of regaining the thick cover it had just left, and Buntty then put a bullet through the back of its head.

That was our Viceroy's first visit to Kaladhungi, but it was not his last, and during the many subsequent occasions on which he honoured our small foothill village with his presence I never had one moment's anxiety for his safety, or for the safety of those who accompanied him. For I never again took risks such as I took on the last day of that memorable shoot.





## *Chapter Eleven*

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FROM NOVEMBER TO MARCH THE climate of the Himalayan foothills has no equal, and the best of these five months is February. In February the air is crisp and invigorating and the wealth of bird life that migrated down from the high mountains in November, in search of food and of warmth, is still with us. The deciduous trees that have stood gaunt and naked throughout the autumn and winter are bursting into bloom, or are putting on a mantle of tender leaf buds of varying shades of green or pink. In February spring is in the very air, in the sap of all trees, and in the blood of all wild life. Whether it be on the mountains in the north, or the plains in the south, or in the shelter of the foothills, spring comes in a night. It is winter when you go to bed one night and when you awaken next morning it is spring, and round you all nature is rejoicing in anticipation of the pleasures that lie ahead, plentiful food, warmth, and the reproduction of life. The migrant birds are packing into small groups, these groups will join others, and on the appointed day and at the command of the leaders the pigeons, paroquets, thrushes, and other fruit-eaters will fly up the valleys to their selected nesting grounds while insect-eaters flitting from tree to tree in the same direction and on the same quest will cover at most a few miles a day. While the migrants are preparing for departure and the regular inhabitants of the foothills are selecting each his own mate and looking for a building site, the combined population of the jungle are vying with each other in a vocal contest which starts at daylight and continues non-stop until dark. In this contest all take part even to the predatory birds whose most vocal member, the serpent eagle, while showing as a mere speck against the blue sky sends his piercing cry back to earth.

While instructing troops in jungle warfare I was in a forest one day in Central India with a party of men among whom were several bird enthusiasts. High in the heavens above us a serpent eagle was circling and screaming. The party was a new draft from different parts of the United Kingdom, destined for Burma, none of whom had ever seen a serpent eagle. Waiting until we came to an open glade I pointed to a speck in the sky.

Field-glasses were produced and disappointment was expressed at the bird being too far away to identify or to see clearly. Telling my companions to stand quite still I took a three-inch-long reed from my pocket, and sounded a note on it. This reed, split at one end and blocked up at the other, reproduced with great exactitude the piercing call of a young deer in distress and was used in my training for signalling, for it is the only natural sound to be heard— both by day and by night— in jungles in which there are deer, and it was, therefore, a sound least likely to attract the attention of an enemy. On hearing the sound the eagle stopped screaming, for though a serpent eagle, living principally on snakes, he does not despise other flesh. Closing his wings he dropped a few hundred feet and then again started soaring in circles. At each call he came nearer, until finally he was circling just above tree-top level where the party with me had a close and clear view of him. Do those who were in that party of fifty, and who survived the Burma campaign, remember that day in the Chindwara jungles and your disappointment at my not being able to make the eagle perch on a branch close enough to photograph? Never mind. Accompany me now on this spring morning and we will see many things just as interesting as that serpent eagle.

You have travelled far on the road of knowledge since that distant Chindwara day. Self-preservation has taught you that the human eye has a field of vision of 180 degrees. Pin-pointing sound which at first you found so difficult is now second nature to you. And having learnt when a boy the difference between the smell of a rose and of a violet you can now identify each tree and plant by the smell of its flower even when that flower is at tree-top level, or hidden deep in the jungle. But much as you learnt and greatly as the knowledge has added to your confidence, safety and pleasure, much still remains to learn and on this beautiful spring morning we will add a little to our store of knowledge.

The canal that forms the northern boundary of our estate, and in which the girls used to bathe, is conveyed across the watercourse I have previously referred to by an aqueduct. This aqueduct is known as Bijli Dant ,which means, 'lightning water channel'. The original aqueduct built by Sir Henry Ramsay was destroyed by lightning many years ago, and because of a local

superstition that lightning is attracted to a given spot by an evil spirit, usually in the form of a snake, the old foundations were not used and a parallel aqueduct was built that has been functioning now for half a century. Wild animals that visit the village at night from the jungles to the north, and who do not like wading or jumping the ten-foot-wide canal, pass under the aqueduct. So on this spring morning we will start our walk from this point.

On the sand in the passage-way under the arch of the aqueduct are the tracks of hare, kakar, pig, porcupine, hyaena, and jackal. Of these the only tracks we will look closely at are the tracks of the porcupine, for, having been made after the night wind had died down, they are free of drift sand. Five toes and a pad and each footprint is distinct, for a porcupine has no need to stalk and does not superimpose one foot upon another. In front of each print is a small hole in the sand made by the porcupine's strong nails, on which he depends to a great extent for his food. The hind pads of porcupines are elongated. This projection, or heel, is not as marked as it is in the case of bear. It is, however, sufficiently marked to distinguish the track of a porcupine from the tracks of all other animals. If you want further confirmation, look closely at the track and you will see a number of finely-drawn lines running between, or parallel to, the track. These finely drawn lines are made by the long drooping quills of the porcupine when they make contact with the ground. A porcupine cannot cast or project its quills, which are barbed, and its method of defence or attack is to raise its quills on end and run backwards. At the end of a porcupine's tail are a number of hollow quills, not unlike long wine glasses on slender stems. These quills are used as a rattle to intimidate enemies, and to convey water to the porcupine's burrow. The quills readily fill with water when submerged, and the porcupine uses this water to keep its burrow cool and free of dust. Porcupines are vegetarians and live on fruit, roots, and field-crops. They also consume the horns shed by deer and the horns of deer killed by leopards, wild dogs, and tigers, possibly to obtain calcium or some other vitamin absent in their normal food. Though a comparatively small animal a porcupine has a big heart, and he will defend himself against great odds.

For a few hundred yards above the aqueduct the bed of the watercourse is stony and, except where a game-track crosses it, we shall find no more

tracks until we come to a long stretch of fine silt, washed down from the foothills, on which the tracks of all the animals that use the watercourse as a highway show up clearly. This stretch of ground is flanked on either side by dense *lantana* in which deer, pig, peafowl, and jungle-fowl, shelter during daylight hours and into which only leopards, tigers, and porcupines venture at night. In the *lantana* you can now hear jungle-fowl scratching up the dead leaves, and a hundred yards away on the topmost branch of a leafless *samal* tree is perched their most deadly enemy, a crested eagle. The eagle is not only the enemy of jungle-fowl, he is also the enemy of peafowl. These are his natural prey and the fact that there are as many old birds as young ones in the jungle, is proof that they are able to look after themselves. For this reason I never interfered with crested eagles until one day, on hearing the distressed cry of a young deer, I hurried to the spot and found a crested eagle holding down a month-old *cheetal* fawn and tearing at its head, while the distracted mother ran round in circles striking at the bird with her forefeet. Desperately as the brave mother had tried to rescue her young one — and of this the scratches and blood on her muzzle bore ample proof — the great eagle had been too much for her, and though I was able to dispose of her enemy I was unable to do anything for her young, beyond putting it out of its misery, for even if I had been able to heal its wounds I would not have been able to restore its sight. That incident has cost the lives of many crested eagles in the jungles in which I have hunted, for though it is difficult to approach close enough to shoot them with a shotgun, they offer a good target for an accurate rifle. The bird on the *samal* tree, however, has nothing to fear from us for we have come out to see things, and not to deal with the enemies of young deer. In my catapult days the greatest battle in which a crested eagle has ever been engaged took place on a stretch of sand, in the bed of the river, a little below the Boar bridge. Possibly mistaking a fish cat for a hare the eagle stooped on it and either because he was unable to withdraw his talons, or because he lost his temper, became involved in life-and-death struggle. Both contestants were equally well armed for the battle; the cat with its teeth and claws, and the eagle with its beak and talons. It is greatly to be regretted that photography at that time was confined to studios and movie cameras were unknown, and that no record was made of that long-drawn-out and desperate battle. If a cat has nine lives an eagle has ten, and it was lives that ultimately proved the deciding factor. With one

precarious life still in hand the eagle left his dead opponent on the sand, and trailing a broken wing went down to a pool in the river where, after quenching his thirst, he surrendered his tenth life.

Several game-tracks lead on to the open ground from the lantana and while we have been looking at the eagle a young *kakar* stag has walked out of the lantana on to the watercourse, fifty yards away, with the intention of crossing it. If we freeze and remain frozen, he will take no notice of us. Of all the animals in the jungle the *kakar* gives the impression of being most on his toes. Even here on this open ground he is walking on tiptoe with his hind legs tucked well under him and at the first indication of danger, be it conveyed by sight, sound, or smell, he will dash away at top speed. The *kakar* is sometimes described as being a mean and a cowardly little animal, and unreliable as a jungle informant. With this description I do not agree. No animal can be called mean for that is exclusively a human trait, and no animal that lives in the densest jungles with tigers, as the *kakar* does, can be accused of being a coward. As for being an unreliable informant I know of no better friend than a man who shoots on foot can have in a jungle than a *kakar*. He is small and defenceless and his enemies are many, and if in a beat he barks at a python or at a pine-marten, when he is expected to bark only at a tiger, he is more to be pitied than accused of being unreliable. For to him and his kind, these two ruthless enemies are a very real menace and he is only carrying out his function— as a watcher— when he warns the jungle folk of their presence.

The *kakar* has two long canine teeth or tusks on its upper jaw. These tusks are very sharp and are the *kakar*'s only means of defence, for the points of his short horns are curved inwards and are of little use as weapons of defence. Some years ago there was a long and inconclusive correspondence in the Indian press about a peculiar sound that *kakar* make on occasions. This sound can best be described as a clicking sound, resembling that made by the bones used by Christy minstrels. It was asserted by some that, as the sound was only heard when *kakar* were running, it was caused by double joints, and by others that it was caused by the tusks being clashed together in some unexplained way. Both these assertions, and others that were advanced, were incorrect. The sound is

made by the animal's mouth in exactly the same way as all other vocal sounds are made, and is used on various occasions: as, for instance, when uncertain of a seen object, when disturbed by a gun dog, or when pursuing a mate. The alarm call of the *kakar* is a clear ringing bark, resembling that of a medium-sized dog.

While the *kakar* has been crossing the watercourse a large flight of insect and fruit-eating birds has approached us from our right. In this flight are migrants as well as local inhabitants, and if we stand where we are the birds will fly over our heads and you will have an opportunity of studying them as they perch on the trees and bushes on both sides of the watercourse, and also while they are in flight. Birds, except when they are very close, are difficult to identify by their colours when sitting where they have no background or when seen against the sky; but every species of bird can be identified while in flight by its shape and by its wing beats. In the flight that is approaching us, every member of which is either chirping, twittering, or whistling, are two varieties of minivets, the short-billed scarlet, and the small orange-breasted. Minivets perch on the topmost leaves and twigs of trees and bushes, and from these commanding positions keep darting into the air to catch winged insects disturbed by their own kind or by other members of the flight. With the minivets are:

*Six varieties of tits.* The grey, yellow-cheeked, blue-winged, red-billed, white-eyed, and the common green.

*Four varieties of flycatchers.* The white-browed fantail, yellow fantail, slaty-headed, and verditer.

*Six varieties of woodpeckers.* The golden-backed, black-naped green, rufous-bellied pied, pigmy pied, yellow-naped, and the scaly-bellied green.

*Four varieties of bulbuls.* The golden-fronted green, white-winged green, white-cheeked crested, and the red-whiskered.

*Three varieties of sunbirds.* The Himalayan red, purple, and the small green.

In addition to these birds, which number between two and three hundred, there are a pair of black-headed golden orioles who are chasing each other from tree to tree, and a lesser racket-tailed drongo who, though not as aggressive as his big brother, has nevertheless acquired several juicy morsels from the flight he is guarding, the last being a fat larva industriously dug out of a dry branch by the pigmy pied woodpecker. The flight of birds has now flown over our heads and disappeared into the jungle on our left, and the only sound to be heard is the scratching of the jungle-fowl in the lantanay and the only bird to be seen is the crested eagle, patient and hopeful, on the topmost branch of the *samal* tree.

Beyond the lantana on the right is an open stretch of parklike ground, on which grow a number of big plum trees. From this direction now comes the alarm bark of a red monkey, followed a few seconds later by the excited chattering and barking of fifty or more monkeys of varying ages and sizes. A leopard is on the move and as he is on more or less open ground it is unlikely that he is trying to secure a kill, in which case he is possibly making for one or other of the deep ravines in the foothills where leopards are often to be found during the hot hours of the day. Winding through the plum trees is a path used both by human beings and by animals. This path crosses our watercourse two hundred yards farther on and as there is a good chance, I would almost say a certainty, of the leopard coming along the path, let us hurry forward for a hundred and fifty yards and sit down with our backs against the high bank on the left. The watercourse here is fifty yards wide and on the trees on the left-hand side is a large troupe of langurs. The warning given by the red monkeys has been heeded, and all the mothers in the troupe have got hold of their young ones, and all eyes are turned in the direction from which the warning came.

There is no need for you to keep your eyes on the path, for the young *langur* who is sitting out on the extreme end of a branch on the tree nearest the path will give us warning of the leopard's approach. Langurs act differently from red monkeys on seeing a leopard. This may be due to better organization, or to their being less courageous than their red cousins. All the red monkeys in a troupe will chatter and bark at the same time on seeing a leopard, and where the jungle is suitable they will follow it over the tree-

tops for considerable distances. The langurs act differently. When the young look-out sees the leopard he will give the alarm call of, 'khok, khok, khok', and when the leader of the troupe, taking direction from the young one, sees the leopard and takes up the call the young one will stop. Thereafter only the leader and the oldest female will give the alarm call—the female call resembles a sneeze—and no attempt will be made to follow the leopard. And now the young look-out stands up on all fours, pokes his head forward and jerks it from side to side. Yes, he is convinced he can see the leopard, so he barks, and one or two hysterical companions behind him follow suit. The leader of the troupe now catches sight of the dread enemy and barks, and a second later is followed by the old female whose alarm call, 'tch', resembles a sneeze. The young ones are now silent and confine themselves to bobbing their heads up and down, and making faces. The troupe appear to know instinctively that they have nothing to fear from the leopard on this spring morning, for if he had been hungry and out to kill he would not have walked out on to the open watercourse as he has done, but would have crossed either higher up or lower down, and approached them unseen. Being as agile, and little heavier, the leopard experiences no difficulty in catching langurs. But it is different with red monkeys, for they retire to the extremities of thin branches, where the leopard is afraid to trust his weight.

With head held high, and the morning sun shining on his beautifully marked coat, the leopard is now crossing the fifty yards of open ground, paying not the slightest attention to the langurs clustered on the trees he is approaching. Once he stops, and after looking up and down the watercourse without noticing us as we sit motionless with our backs to the bank, he continues unhurriedly on his way. Climbing the steep bank he disappears from our view, but as long as he is in sight of the leader and of the old female they will continue to send their warning call into the jungle.

Let us now examine the tracks of the leopard. The path where it crosses the watercourse runs over red clay, trodden hard by bare human feet. Over this clay is a coating of fine white dust, so the conditions for our purpose are ideal. We will assume that we did not see the leopard, and that we have come on the tracks by accident. The first thing we note is that the pug marks have every appearance of having been newly made, and therefore



that they are fresh. We get this impression from the fact that the pile or nap of the dust where it took the weight of the leopard is laid flat and smooth, and that the walls of the dust surrounding the pads and toes are clear cut and more or less perpendicular.

Presently under the action of the wind and the rays of the hot sun the nap will stand up again and the walls will begin to crumble. Ants and other insects will cross the track; dust will drift into it; bits of grass and dead leaves will be blown on to, or will fall on it; and in time the pug marks will be obliterated. There is no hard-and-fast rule by which you can judge the age of a track, whether it be the pug marks of a leopard or tiger, or the track of a snake or a deer. But by close observation and by taking into consideration the position of the track, whether in an exposed or in a sheltered spot, the time of day and of night when certain insects are on the move, the time at which winds normally blow, and the time at which dew begins to fall or to drip from the trees, you can make a more or less accurate guess when the track was made. In the present case we have satisfied ourselves from the appearance of the track that it is fresh, but this is not the only interesting point about it. We have yet to determine whether the leopard was a male or a female, whether it was old or young, and whether it was a big or a small animal. The round shape of the pug marks show it was a male. The absence of any cracks or creases in the pads, the round toes, and compact appearance of the entire pug marks show that the leopard was young. With regard to size, here again only observation and experience will enable you to judge the size of animals by their pug marks, and when you have gained this experience you can assess the length of either a leopard or a tiger to a possible error of an inch or two. The Koals of Mirzapur, when asked the size of a tiger, measure the pug mark with a blade of grass and then, laying the blade down, measure it with the width of their fingers. How accurate their method is I am not in a position to say. For myself I prefer to guess the size or length of an animal from the general appearance of its pug mark, for whatever method is adopted, it can at best be only a guess.

A little beyond where the path crosses the watercourse there is a narrow strip of firm sand, flanked on one side by rocks and on the other by a high bank. A herd of *cheetal* has gone along this strip of sand. It is always

interesting when in a jungle to count the number of animals in a herd, whether *cheetal* or sambhar, and to take note of the individual members. This enables you to recognize the herd when you next see it and to assess casualties, and, further, it gives you a friendly feeling towards the herd as being one that you know. If the herd is on open ground it is not difficult to count the stags, note the length and shape of their horns, and count the hinds and young ones. When, however, only one of the herd is visible and the others are in cover, the following method of inducing the hidden animals to come out into the open will, nine times out of ten, be found effective. After stalking to within a reasonable distance of the deer you can see, lie down behind a tree or a bush and give the call of a leopard. All animals can pin-point sound, and when the deer is looking in your direction project your shoulder a little beyond the bole of the tree, and move it slowly up and down once or twice, or shake a few leaves of the bush. On seeing the movement the deer will start calling; and its companions will leave the cover and range themselves on either side of her. I have on occasion got as many as fifty *cheetal* to show themselves in this way to enable me to photograph them at leisure. I would like, however, to add one word of warning. Never try calling like a leopard, or any other animal, unless you are absolutely certain you have the area to yourself, and even then keep a careful look all round. The following is my reason for the warning. I heard a leopard calling repeatedly one night, and from the intonation of the call I concluded it was in distress. Before daylight next morning I set off to try to find out, if I could, what was wrong with the animal. During the night it had changed its position and I now located it on a hill some distance away, where it was still calling. Selecting a spot where a game-track led on to an open glade, and where I would see the leopard before it saw me, I lay down behind a boundary pillar and answered the call. Thereafter, for a matter of half an hour or more, call answered call. The leopard was coming but it was slow about it and was coming very cautiously. Eventually when it was a hundred yards away I stopped calling. I was lying flat down with my elbows resting on the ground and my chin resting in my hands, momentarily expecting the leopard to appear, when I heard the swish of leaves behind me and on turning my head, looked straight into the muzzle of a rifle. Late the previous evening Cassels, Deputy Commissioner of Naini Tal, and Colonel Ward had arrived at the forest bungalow and unknown to me had shot a

leopard cub. During the night the mother had been heard calling and at crack of dawn Ward set out on an elephant to try to shoot the mother. Dew was on the ground, and the *mahout* was well trained, and he brought his elephant up without a sound until only a fringe of trees lay between us. Ward could see me, but he was not as young as he had been and, further, the early morning light was not too good, and he was unable to get the sights of his rifle to bear accurately on my shoulders, so he signalled the elephant to go forward. Mercifully for all of us, when the elephant cleared the fringe of trees and was only ten yards from me, and when the mahout— also an old man— was pointing and Ward was leaning down and aligning his sights for a second time the elephant released a branch it was holding down, and, hearing the sound, I turned my head and looked up into the muzzle of a heavy rifle.

The herd of *cheetal* whose tracks we are looking at and in which we are now interested, went along the strip of sand the previous evening. This you can tell from the night insects that have crossed the tracks, and from the dew drops that have fallen on them from an overhanging tree. The herd may be a mile or five miles away, out on an open glade or hidden in cover; even so, we will count the number of animals in the herd and this I will show you how to do. We will assume that when a *cheetal* is standing, the distance between its hind- and fore-hooves is thirty inches. Take a stick and draw a line across the sand at right angles to the tracks. Measure thirty inches from the line you have drawn, this will be easy for your shoes are ten inches long, and draw a second line across the sand parallel to the first. Now take your stick and count the number of hoof prints between the two lines, marking each print with the point of your stick as you do so. The result of your count is, let us say, thirty. Divide this number by two and you can be reasonably sure that there were fifteen *cheetal* in the herd that passed that way the previous evening. This method of counting animals of any species, whether wild or domestic, will give accurate results for small numbers, say up to ten, and approximate results for greater numbers, provided the distance between the hind- and fore-feet is known. In the case of small animals such as wild dogs, pigs, and sheep, the distance will be less than thirty inches, and in the case of large animals such as *sambhar* and domestic cattle it will be more than thirty inches.

For the information of those who were not with me during the years of training for jungle warfare, I should like to assert that it is possible to glean a lot of useful information from the footprints of human beings in a jungle, whether seen on a road, path, or game-track, or in fact anywhere where the footprints of men in motion are to be seen. Let us assume, for the sake of interest, that we are in enemy country and that we have come on a game-track on which there are footprints. From the appearance of the footprints, their size, shape, absence or presence of nails or sprags, iron shod or plain heels, leather soles or rubber, and so on, we conclude that the prints have not been made by members of our own force, but by the enemy. This point being settled we have to determine when the party passed that way, and the number of men in the party. You know how to assess the time. To find out the number of men in the party we will draw a line across the track, and with the toe of one foot on this line take a step of thirty inches, and draw a second line across the track. The number of heel marks between these two lines will give the number of men in the party. There are other interesting things you can learn from the footprints, and one of the most important of these is the speed at which the party was travelling. When a human being is moving at a normal pace his weight is distributed evenly over his footprint and his stride is from thirty to thirty-two inches, according to his height. As the speed is increased less weight falls on the heel and more on the toes, the imprint of the heel gets less and the imprint of the toes greater, and the length of the stride gets longer. This process of less heel and more toes continues to get more apparent until when running at full speed little more than the ball of the foot and the toes come in contact with the ground. If the party was a small one, ten or a dozen in all, it will be possible to see if any were limping, and blood on the track will indicate that one or more were wounded.

If you ever get a flesh wound in the jungles I will show you a small and insignificant little plant that will not only cauterize but also heal your wound better than anything else that I know. The plant, which is found in all jungles, grows to a height of twelve inches, and has a daisylike flower on a long slender stem. The leaves are fleshy and serrated, like the leaf of a chrysanthemum. To use the plant break off a few leaves, rinse them in water to wash off the dust— if water is available— and then squeeze the leaves

between finger and thumb, and pour the juice freely into the wound. No further treatment is needed and, if the wound is not a deep one, it will heal in a day or two. The plant is well named, Brahm Buti, 'God's flower'.

Many of you were my good comrades in the Indian and Burma jungles during the war years and if I worked you hard, because time was short, you will long since have forgiven me. And I hope you have not forgotten all that we learnt together, as for instance: the fruit and flowers it was safe to eat; where to look for edible roots and tubers; the best substitutes for tea and coffee; what plants, barks, and leaves to use for fever, sores, and sore throats; what barks and creepers to use for stretchers, and for making ropes to sling heavy equipment and guns across streams and ravines; how to avoid getting trench feet and prickly heat; how to create fire; how to obtain dry fuel in a wet forest; how to kill game without resort to fire-arms; how to cook or make a dish of tea without metal utensils; how to procure a substitute for salt; how to treat snake bites, wounds, and stomach disorders. And, finally, how to keep fit and conduct ourselves in the jungles to leave at peace with all wildlife. These and many other things you and I, from the mountains and plains of India, from the villages and cities of the United Kingdom, from the United States of America, from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and from other lands, learned together. Not with the object of spending the rest of our days in the jungles, but to give us confidence in ourselves and in each other, to remove our fears of the unknown, and to show our enemies that you were better men than they. But much as we learned in those days of good comradeship we only touched the fringe of knowledge, for the book of nature has no end as it has no beginning.

We have still much of our spring morning before us, and we have now arrived at the foothills where the vegetation differs from that on the flat ground we have recently traversed. Here there are a number of *ficus* and plum trees that have attracted a variety of fruit-eating birds, the most interesting of which are the giant hornbills. Hornbills nest in hollow trees and have the unusual habit of sealing the females into the nests. This habit throws a heavy burden on the male, for the female moults and grows enormously fat during the incubation period and when the eggs— usually two— are hatched she is unable to fly, and the male has the strenuous task

of providing food for the whole family. By his ungainly appearance, his enormous beak fitted with a sound-box, and his heavy and laboured flight, the hornbill gives the impression of having missed the bus of evolution. And his habit of sealing up the nest and leaving only a small hole through which the female projects the tip of her beak to take the food the male brings her, possibly dates back to prehistoric days when the bird had more powerful enemies than it has today. All birds that nest in hollow trees or that make holes in trees in which to nest, have common enemies. Some of these birds— tits, robins, hoopoes— are quite defenceless and the question therefore arises why the hornbill, who by reason of its powerful beak is best able to defend itself, should be the only one of these many tree-nesting birds to consider it necessary to seal up its nest. Another unusual habit which the hornbill does not share with any other bird that I know of, is its habit of adorning its feathers with pigment. This pigment, which is yellow and can be readily wiped off with a handkerchief, is carried in a small sack above the tail and is laid with the beak on to two broad white bands that extend across the width of the wings. Why the hornbill finds it necessary to paint these white bands yellow with a pigment that washes off every time it rains, I can only attribute to camouflage against an enemy, or enemies, that it suffered from in bygone days. For the only enemy it occasionally suffers from now is a leopard, and against a leopard operating at night camouflage is of little avail.

In addition to the hornbills there are a number of other fruit-eating birds on the *ficus* and plum trees. Among these are two varieties of green pigeon, the Bengal, and the pintail. Two varieties of barbet, the crimson-breasted, and the common green. Four varieties of bulbul, the Himalayan black, common Bengal, red-whiskered, and white-cheeked. Three varieties of paroquets, the rose-ringed, the Alexandrine, and the blossom-headed. Scratching among the dead leaves and eating the ripe fruit dropped by the other birds, are fifty or more white-capped laughing thrushes. These thrushes were the last to migrate from the high nesting-grounds and will be the first to return to them.

Near the *ficus* trees is a fire-track, and crossing it is a well-worn game-track which runs straight up the hill to a salt-lick near which there is a

saucer of water fed by a tiny spring. Between the salt-lick and the water is an old stump. Here a stunted kusum tree stood, in the branches of which poachers repeatedly built machans. Shooting over salt-licks and over water is prohibited, but poachers are no respecters of game laws, and as dismantling the machans had no effect I eventually cut the tree down. I have heard it stated that carnivora do not kill at salt-licks and water holes. However considerate carnrvora may be in other parts of the world, in India they certainly have no compunction about killing at salt-licks. In fact it is at these places that they do most of their killing, as you can see from the bones and the horns partly eaten by porcupines that you will find in the vicinity of this salt-lick, and in the vicinity of all salt-licks that are surrounded by forests in which deer and monkeys live.

Let us now climb the hill above the salt-lick to a point from where we can get a bird's eye view of the foothills and the forests that lie at their feet. Before us stretches the forest through which we have just come to our starting-point, the canal. This forest is as nature made it, for it has little timber of commercial value and has, therefore, escaped the devastating hand of man. The light green patches in the foreground are shisham saplings which have grown from seeds washed down from the foothills by monsoon floods. Later, when these saplings grow to maturity, they will provide the best timber for cart wheels, and for furniture. The dark-green patches with clusters of red berries are *runi* trees, which provide the powder known to commerce as kamala. When the poor people who migrate in winter from the high hills to the foothills in search of food and warmth— as do the birds— can spare a day from their regular labours, old and young resort to the jungles to collect kamala. Kamala is a red powder which adheres to the *runi* berry, and the method of collection is to cut down the branches, strip the berries into big shallow baskets, and then with the hand rub the berries against the sides of the basket. The powder when freed from the berries drifts through the cracks in the basket and is caught on a *cheetal* skin, or square of cloth. A family of five— a man and his wife and three children— working from sunrise to sunset can, when the crop is plentiful, collect four pounds of powder worth from one to two rupees, according to the market price. The powder is used in India and the Middle East for dyeing wool, and until dishonest middlemen started adulterating kamala

with brick dust, it was extensively used in the United States for colouring butter. The powder is also used for medicinal purposes, and mustard oil in which *runi* berries have been boiled is used for rheumatism.

Interspersed with the *shisham* saplings and *runi* trees, are feathery-leaved *khair* trees. These *khair* trees in addition to providing the foothill villages with plowshares, provide a cottage industry for tens of thousands of poor people in the United Provinces. The industry, which is a winter one and is carried on day and night for a period of four months, produces a commodity known locally as kach, and to commerce as catechu. It also produces— as a by-product— the dye known as khaki, used for dyeing cloth and fishing nets. A friend of mine, a man by the name of Mirza, was, I believe, the first to discover khaki dye, and the discovery was accidental. Mirza was one day leaning over an iron pan in which *khair* chips were being boiled, to make kach, when a white handkerchief he was carrying fell into the pan. Fishing the handkerchief out with a stick Mirza sent it to the wash. When the handkerchief was brought back Mirza found it had not lost any of its colour, so, reprimanding the washerman, he told him to take it away and clean it. Returning with the handkerchief the washerman said he had tried every method known to his trade of removing stains, but he could not take the colour out of the small square of linen. It was thus that Mirza found he had discovered a fast dye, which is now produced in the flourishing factory he erected at Izatnagar.

Mingled with the many shades of green— for each tree has its own individual colour— are vivid splashes of orange, gold, lilac, pink, and red. The trees with orange coloured flowers are dhank (*Butea Giondosa*) which produces a ruby-coloured gum used for dyeing silk of the finest quality. The trees with the three-foot-long showers of golden bloom are amaltas (*Cassia Fistula*). The two-foot-long cylindrical seedpods of this tree contain a sweet jelly like substance which is used throughout Kumaon as a laxative. The trees with the big lilac coloured flowers are kachanar (*Bauhinia*). The pink are kusum trees and the mass of pink shading from delicate shell to deep rose, are not flowers but tender young leaves. The red are *samal* (silk cotton) trees the flowers of which are loved by all birds that drink nectar, and by paroquets and monkeys that eat the fleshy flowers, and by deer and



pigs that eat them when they fall to the ground. Later in the year the *samal* flowers will give way to large woody seedpods. When the hot winds blow in April these pods will explode like antiaircraft shells and a white cloud of silk cotton (kapoc used in life-belts), each section carrying a seed, will drift away in the wind to regenerate nature's garden. All seeds that are not carried from one place to another by birds or animals are provided with buoyant material or with parchment sails or propellers, to enable the winds of heaven to carry them from place to place. There are, of course, exceptions, one of which is the gotail which bears a fruit like a small green apple and which no bird or animal eats. This tree grows on the banks of rivers and the water does for its seeds what birds and animals, and the wind, do for other seeds. Another is the coconut, which is provided with a husk that enables it to float and be carried by the ocean waves from shore to shore.

Beyond the canal, our starting- point, is our village. The vivid green and gold patches show where the young wheat is sprouting, and where the mustard crop is in full flower. The white line at the foot of the village is the boundary wall, which took ten years to build, and beyond the wall the forest stretches in an unbroken line until it merges into the horizon. To the east and to the west as far as the eye can see is limitless forest, and behind us the hills rise ridge upon ridge to the eternal snows.

Here as we sit in this beautiful and peaceful spot in the shadow of the mighty Himalayas, with the forest round us putting on a new mantle of spring, with every current of wind bringing with it the sweet smell of flowers, and with the air throbbing with the joyful songs of a great multitude of birds, we can forget for a spell the strains and stresses of our world, and savour the world of the jungle folk. For here the law of the jungle prevails. The law that is older and infinitely better than man-made laws. The law that permits each individual to live his own life, and that anticipates no troubles or sorrows for the morrow. Dangers there are for all, but those dangers only add zest to life, and while keeping every individual alert and on its toes, take nothing from the joy of living. And that there is joy all round you, who can now pin-point sound, recognize every bird and animal from its call, and assign a reason for the call, have ample proof.

Away to our left a peacock is screaming his mating call and from that call you know he is dancing, with tail-feathers spread, to impress a bevy of admiring hens. Nearer at hand a jungle-cock is crowing defiance to all and sundry and is being answered by others of his kind who are equally defiant. But of fights there are few, for to fight in the jungle exposes the contestants to danger. Away to our right a *sambhar* stag is warning the jungle folk that the leopard we saw an hour ago is lying out on an exposed spot basking in the sun. The stag will bell until the leopard retires for the day into heavy cover, where he will be screened from the prying eyes of informants. In a thicket below us twenty or more white-eyed tits, white-winged bulbuls, and grey headed flycatchers, have found a spotted owlet dozing in a leafy bower and are calling to companions to come and see what they have found. They know it is safe to approach and scream into the wise one's very ears, for only when he has young will he occasionally kill in daylight. And the owlet on his part knows that no matter how much he is feared and hated by his tormentors, he has nothing to fear from them, and that when they tire of their sport they will leave him to his sleep. In the air all round there is sound, and each sound has a meaning. The liquid notes, the most beautiful of all the songs to be heard in our jungles, is a shama wooing a bashful mate. The tap-tap-tapping is a golden-backed woodpecker making a hole in a dead tree for his new home. The harsh braying is a *cheetal* stag challenging a rival to battle. High in the heavens a serpent eagle is screaming, and higher still a flight of vultures are patiently quartering the sky. Yesterday, first a Himalyan blue magpie, and then a pair of crows, showed the vultures where a tiger had hidden his kill in a thicket near where the peacock is now dancing, and today as they circle and soar they are hoping for the same good fortune.

As you sit here, alone or in company with a friend, you can realize to the full what your knowledge of jungle lore means to you, and how greatly that knowledge has added to your confidence and to your pleasure. No longer does the jungle hold any terrors for you, for you know there is nothing for you to be afraid of. If the necessity arose you could live on the jungles, and you could lie down wherever you were and sleep without any feeling of unease. You have learnt to maintain direction, to be conscious at all times of wind direction, and you will never again lose yourself in the jungle no

matter whether you move by night or by day. Hard though it was at first to train your eyes, you know now that your field of vision is 180 degrees and that every movement in that field will be seen by you. You can enter into the lives of all the jungle folk, for you have learnt their language; and being able to locate sound, you can follow their every movement. You can now move silently, and shoot accurately, and if the necessity ever arose again for you to face an enemy in the jungles you would not face him with an inferiority complex, but with the lull knowledge that no matter what his reputation you are a better-trained man than he is, and have nothing to learn or to fear from him.

It is now time to wend our way home, for we have a long way to go, and Maggie will be waiting breakfast for us. We will return the way we came and as we pass the strip of sand on which we counted the cheetaltracks, the path by which the leopard crossed the watercourse, the fine silt washed down from the foothills, and the passage-way under the aqueduct, we will drag a branch behind us. This we will do to obliterate our tracks, and all the tracks we saw this morning so that when we visit the jungle again tomorrow, the next clay, or maybe the day after, we will know that all the tracks we see date from the time we last passed that way.



## Chapter Twelve

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WHILE ABSORBING JUNGLE LORE IT is possible to develop a sense that has been handed down to us from the days of primitive man and which, for want of a better name, I shall call, Jungle Sensitiveness. This sense, which can be acquired only by living in the jungles in close association with wild life, is the development of the subconscious warning of danger.

Many individuals can testify to having avoided trouble by acting on an impulse that came how they knew not, and that warned their subconscious being against an impending danger. In one case the warning may have been against proceeding along a certain street in which a moment later a bomb exploded; in another, moving just in time from the vicinity of a building wrecked a second later by a shell; or in yet another, strapping away from the shelter of a tree which a moment later was struck by lightning.

Whatever the danger may have been that the impulse enabled the individual to avoid, it was a known and an anticipated danger. In the story of the Chowgarh man-eater I have given two instances of subconscious warning. At the time the warning was conveyed to me the whole of my attention was concentrated on avoiding being killed by the man-eater, and the warning I received that danger of an attack from a man-eater threatened — in the one case from a piled-up heap of rocks, and in the other from an overhanging rock under which I had to pass— was therefore quite natural and understandable. I should now like to give one instance of unconscious warning of unsuspected danger, which I can only explain as resulting from highly developed jungle sensitiveness.

It was my custom during the winter months at Kaladhungi to shoot an occasional sambbar or *cheetal* stag for the tenants of our village. One afternoon a deputation arrived to remind me that I had shot no meat for some time, and to request me to shoot a *cheetal* to celebrate a local festival on the morrow. The jungles were very dry at the time, making stalking

difficult, and the sun had set before I found and shot the stag I was looking for. Deciding that it was too late to bring in the deer that night I covered it up to give it a measure of protection against leopard, bear and pig and made for home, intending to return with a carrying party early next morning.

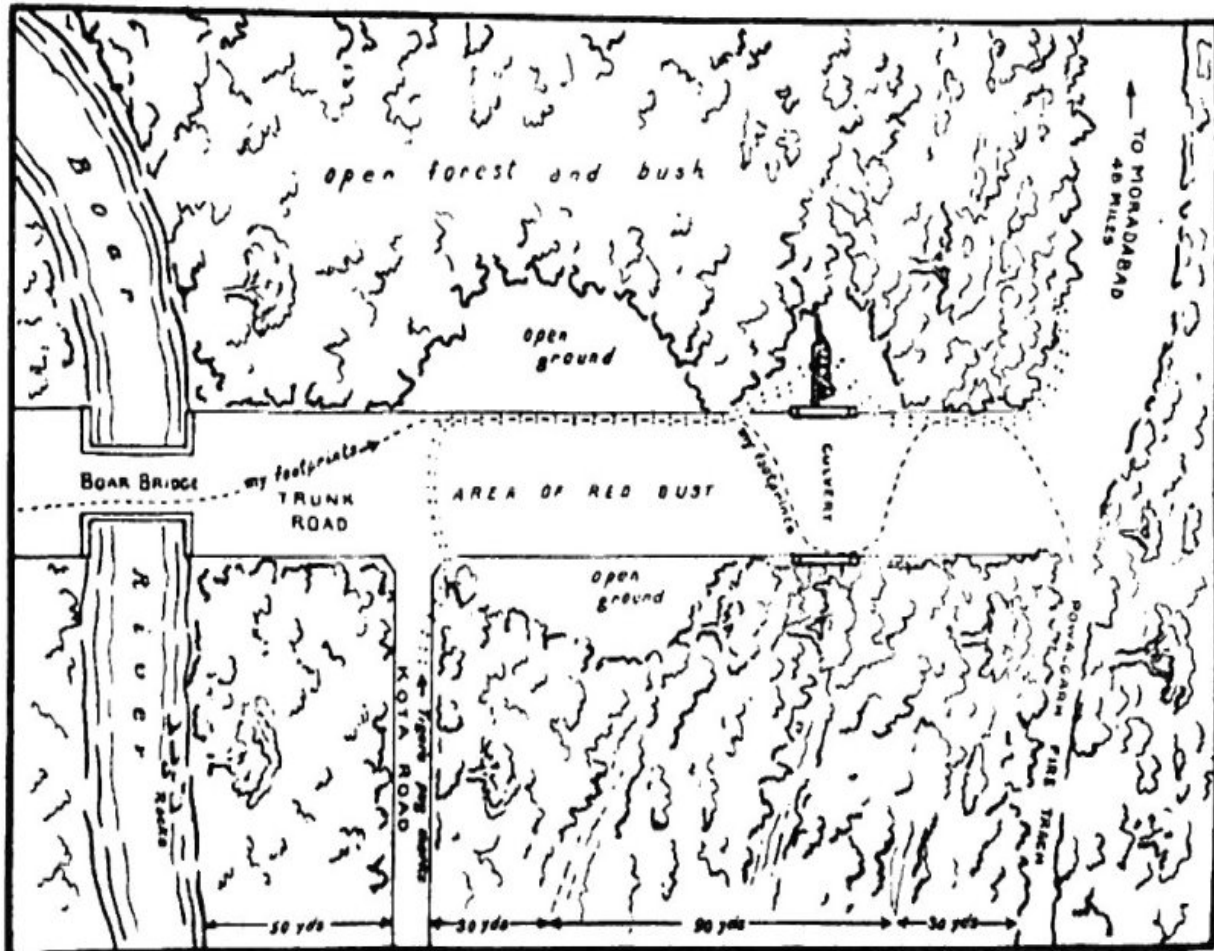
My shot had been heard in the village and I found ten or a dozen men waiting for me on the steps of our cottage, equipped with ropes and a stout bamboo pole. In reply to their questions I told them I had shot the deer they wanted, and added that if they met me at the village gate at sunrise next morning I would take them to where I had covered it up. The men had come prepared to bring in the deer that night and they said that if I would tell them where the deer was they would go out and try to find it for themselves. On the previous occasions on which I had shot deer for the village, I had laid a trail. The men knew the jungles as well as I did and all the information they needed, when I shot meat for them, was the position of the mark I had made on fire-track, game-path, or cattle-track, and from this mark they would follow the trail I had laid. This system of recovering an animal had never failed, but on the present occasion, having shot the deer late in the evening and there being no moon, I had not laid a trail. The men were anxious to divide up the deer that night in preparation for the feast on the morrow, and as I did not wish to disappoint them I told them to go up the Powalgarh fire-track for two and a half miles and wait for me at the foot of an old haldu tree that was a landmark known to all of us. So while the men streamed out of the compound I sat down to a cup of tea Maggie had brewed for me.

A man walking alone can cover the ground much faster than a body of men walking in Indian file, so I did not hurry over my tea, and when I picked up my rifle to follow the men it was quite dark. I had walked a good few miles between sunrise and sunset that day but being as fit as man could be an additional five or six miles meant nothing to me. The men had a good start but they were still some distance from the haldu tree when I caught them up. I had no difficulty in finding the deer, and when the men had lashed it to the bamboo pole I took them back by a short cut which reduced the distance by half a mile. It was dinner-time when I got back to our

cottage, and telling Maggie I would postpone my bath until bedtime, I asked her to call for dinner while I had a wash.

When undressing to have my bath that night I was very surprised to find that my light rubber-soled shoes were full of red dust, and that my feet were coated with it. I am very careful of my feet and have in consequence never suffered from any form of foot trouble, and I could not understand how I had been so careless as to get my feet all messed up. Small things have a habit of nagging at the memory and the memory in turn nags at the nerves that control the cells in which information is stored, and then, suddenly and without any conscious effort on our part the information we are seeking—be it the name of a person, or of a place, or as in the present case the reason for my messed-up feet— is presented to us.

The old trunk road which carried all the traffic to the hills before the railway to Kathgodam was built, runs in a straight line from our gate to the Boar bridge. Three hundred yards beyond the bridge the road turns to the left. On the right-hand side of this turn the road, at the time I am writing of, was met by the Powalgarh fire-track which for a few hundred yards followed the alignment of the present Powalgarh motor road. Fifty yards from the Boar bridge the trunk road is met on the right by the Kota road coming down from the north. Between the junction of these two roads and the turn, the road runs through a shallow depression. Heavy cart traffic had churned up the red earth in the depression, resulting in the road at this point being six inches deep in dust. To avoid walking in the dust the foot traffic had trodden a narrow path between the dusty road and the jungle on the left. Thirty yards on the near side of the turn, the road and the narrow footpath ran over a small culvert which had parapet walls a foot thick and eighteen inches high, to prevent carts running off the road. The culvert had ceased to function many years previously and at the lower end of it, i.e. the end nearer the narrow footpath, there was a bed of sand eight or ten feet square on a level with the road.



Unconscious warning of unsuspected danger

The information concerning my dirty feet that had been brought back to memory was, that when following my men after tea I had left the narrow footpath a few yards on the near side of the culvert; crossed the road from left to right through the six-inch-deep dust; skirted along the right-hand edge of the road and after passing over the culvert, recrossed the road, and continued along the footpath. Why had I done this? From the time I left our cottage, to the time I overtook the men near the haldu tree, I had not heard a single sound that had given me even the suspicion of uneasiness, and I had seen nothing, for it was a dark night. Why then had I crossed the road, and after passing over the culvert, recrossed it?

I have stated earlier in this book that from the day I traced the terrifying sound made by Dansay's banshee as the friction of two smooth surfaces, I have made a hobby of finding a reason for every unusual thing I have heard

or seen in the jungles. Well, here was something unusual, something that needed an explanation, so before there was any traffic on the road next morning I went out to try to get the explanation.

The men after leaving our gate the previous evening had gone down the road in a bunch and had been joined at the village gate by an additional three men, bringing the number to fourteen.

After crossing the Boar bridge the party had proceeded along the footpath in Indian file, crossed the culvert, and at the turn crossed from the left to the right of the road, and gone up the fire-track. Shortly thereafter, a tiger came down the Kota road, scratched up the ground near a bush at the junction of the two roads, crossed the trunk road, and proceeded along the footpath. Here the tiger's pug marks were superimposed on the footprints of my men. When the tiger had proceeded along the footpath for about thirty yards, I came over the bridge.

The bridge is an iron one and quite evidently the tiger heard me crossing it, for I was walking fast and making no attempt to go silently. When the tiger found I was not going up the Kota road, but was coming in his direction, he hurried down the footpath and, leaving it at the culvert, lay down on the patch of sand facing the road and with his head a yard from the footpath. I followed the tiger down the footpath and when I was within five yards of the culvert I turned to the right, crossed the road through the six-inch-deep dust, skirted along the right edge of the road, and after passing over the culvert recrossed the road to the footpath. And this I had done unconsciously, to avoid passing within a yard of the tiger.

I believe that if I had continued along the footpath I could have passed the tiger with perfect safety provided (a) that I had proceeded steadily on my way, (b) that I had made no vocal sound, (c) that I had made no violent movement. The tiger had no intention of killing me, but if at the moment of passing him I had stopped to listen to any jungle sound, or had coughed or fanned or blown my nose, or had thrown the rifle from one shoulder to the other, there was a chance that the tiger would have got nervous and attacked me. My subconscious being was not prepared to take this risk and jungle

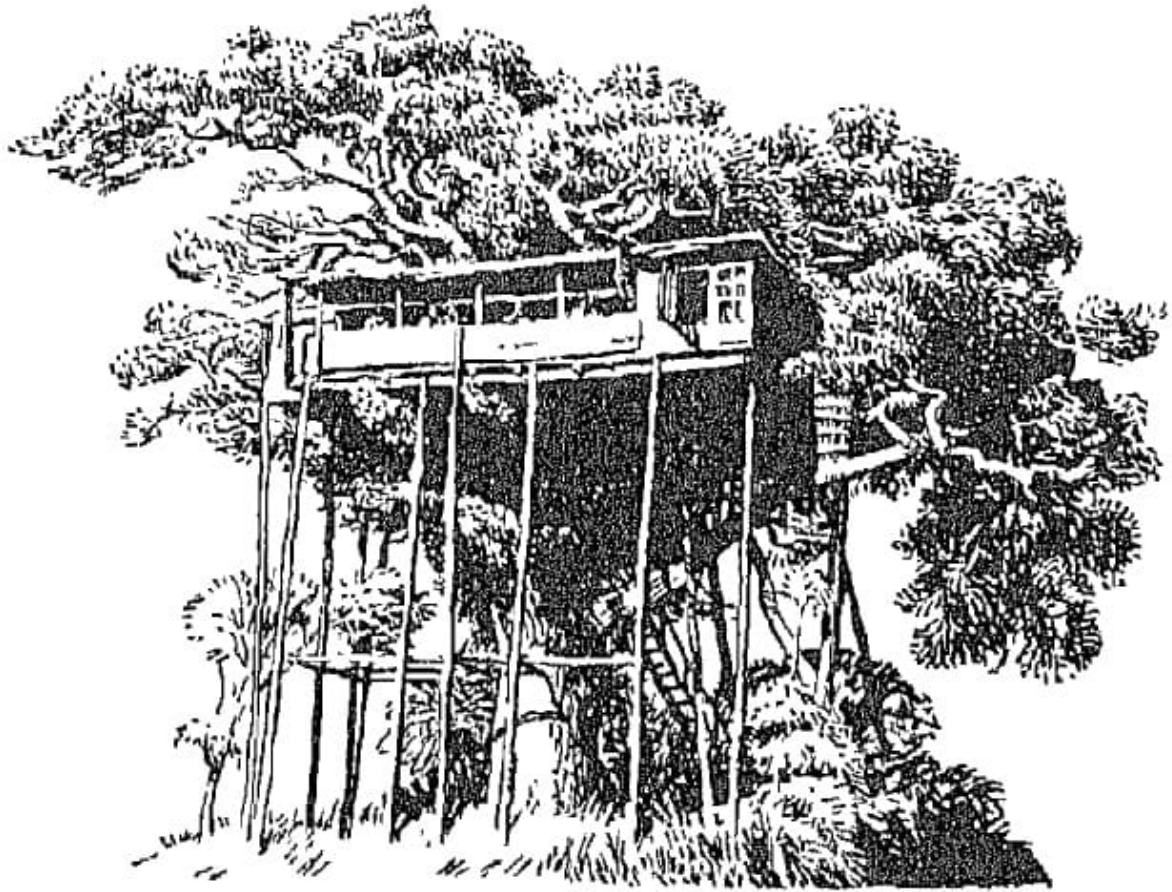


sensitiveness came to my assistance and guided me away from the potential danger.

On how many occasions jungle sensitiveness has enabled me to avoid dangers of one kind or another it is not possible for me to say, but from the fact that in all the years I have lived in the jungles I have only once come in actual contact with a wild animal is proof that some sense, call it jungle sensitiveness, or call it my Guardian Angel, has intervened at the critical moment to ensure my safety.



# TREE TOPS



*By*  
JIM CORBETT

*Illustrated by*  
RAYMOND SHEPPARD

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Tree Tops

## *Introduction*

*by Lord Hailey, Governor of the United Provinces, 1928-1934.*

**J**IM CORBETT'S story of the visit paid by Her Majesty the Queen to Tree Tops in 1952 was written only a short time before his sudden death in Kenya on 19 April 1955. He was then nearing his eightieth year. When he had visited England in 1951 he had shown few signs of his age, but he had in fact never fully recovered from the effects of the severe illness from which he had suffered in Central India, in the course of training British troops in jungle fighting before they took part in the Burma Campaign.

I do not know how far the picture formed of him by his readers differs from that which will live in the memory of his friends. In one respect perhaps the reader who has known him through his books may have some advantage over them. He seldom spoke of the hardships and dangers of those encounters with man-eaters which gave such an incomparable thrill to his record of them. He felt, I think, that these were matters which lay between him and the great beasts whose strength and courage he respected, and whose lapses into ways that were a menace to man he could in due season forget.

Many of his acquaintances probably failed to realize that the name and deeds of this quiet and unassuming man were a household word among the hillfolk of the scattered hamlets of Kumaon. I doubt indeed if he would ever have given to the world the earliest of his books, *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, in 1944, had he not hoped that its publication might contribute something to the funds of St. Dunstan's, which had in the previous year opened a training school for blinded Indian soldiers. I remember how modest was his own estimate of what this contribution might be. He did not realize how enthralling were the stories he had to tell, nor how greatly their interest would be enhanced by his manner of telling them. Yet, as the world was soon to acknowledge, he possessed, in fact, that supreme art of narrative which owes nothing to conscious artistry.

Since, however, he is necessarily the centre of his own stories, they have much to reveal of his own history and way of life. Those who have read *My India and Jungle Lore* will not need to be told that he was one of a large family and was brought up during the summer months at the Himalayan hill station of Naini Tal, and in the winter on the small property held by his family at Kaladhungi in the foothills below it. Sport was in his blood, and from boyhood he set himself to gain that intimacy with the jungle and its life that he would need if he was to enjoy such sport as his modest means allowed. He never forgot in after life the habit which he then taught himself of noiseless movement in the jungle nor his rare understanding of its sights and sounds, and it was then that he began to acquire that unique combination of speed and accuracy in the use of the rifle to which he was later to owe so much. One who knew him at that period has said, however, that even in his youth he took no special pride in this achievement. Good shooting was to him an obligation rather than an accomplishment. If things were to be killed, then this should be done instantly, and without pain to them.

As soon as he left school at Naini Tal, he found employment with the Railway Department, at first in small posts but afterwards in charge of the transport at Mokameh Ghat, where the Ganges River created a broad gap between the two railway systems. There is a great bridge over the river now, but at that time more than half a million tons of traffic were ferried across it every year, and had to be transhipped from one gauge of rails to another. The conditions of work were exceptionally arduous, and that he carried it on for over twenty years was due not only to his power of physical endurance, but to his friendly personal contacts with the large force of Indian labour which he employed as contractor. They gave an unmistakable proof of their own feelings for him during the First World War. He helped to raise a Kumaon Labour Corps for service overseas, and took his section of it to France. It was then that his Indian subordinates at Mokameh Ghat arranged with the labourers that they would together carry on the work on his behalf throughout his absence. In the War he was given the substantive rank of Major in the Indian Army.

The nature of the work during these years gave him little leisure for sport, but during his holidays in Kumaon he was able on three occasions to answer the calls which were made on him for his help against man-eaters. Between the years 1907 and 1911 he disposed of the Champawat and Muktesar man-eaters and the Panar leopard. The first and last of these marauders were believed to have killed between them no fewer than 886 human beings, and they were perhaps the worst of the man-eaters from which Kumaon suffered in our generation, though others of a later date became more notorious. The leopard of Rudraprayag, for instance, which was officially recorded to have killed 150 human beings, acquired so wide a reputation in India because it preyed on the pilgrims who followed the route to a well-known Hindu shrine.

With his retirement from his work at Mokameh Ghat there began a new chapter in his life. He was now his own master. His requirements were simple; he was unmarried, but he had at Naini Tal and Kaladhungi the devoted companionship of two sisters, one of whom (the Maggie to whom he so often refers) has survived him. It was now that there occurred the majority of the encounters with man-eaters of which he has written in his books. The passing of the years did nothing to diminish the energy or the courage which he devoted to this task. The disposal of the Rudraprayag leopard, with its long tale of hard living and of sleepless nights, when Corbett was almost as often the hunted as the hunter, took place when he was fifty-one. The killing of the Thak tiger occurred when he was sixty-three. There seemed to be no limit to his endurance of fatigue or his ability to meet unruffled what seemed to be misfortune or mishap.

But there was another aspect also in the life which he now led. It seemed that sport, in the sense that the word is commonly used, had ceased to hold first place with him. So far as he was concerned, the tiger and the leopard at all events were immune, unless they were taking human life. Often when he and I were together, we were visited by deputations of the hillfolk asking for help; to be more correct, it was he that they sought out. He it was, as all their world knew, who had so often ventured his own life to save others in Kumaon from a Terror which filled their days and nights with fear. There was indeed here something that passed the ordinary bounds of human fear,

for the ways of the ancient gods of the hills are unpredictable, and who could tell that the Terror was not a visitation from them? But the rubric that Corbett applied to the inquisition which was now opened was strict, however friendly and considerate in its terms. It was no use for them to plead their losses in cattle or goats. The tiger was lord of the jungle and must have its dues. Not until he himself was convinced that a tiger had been killing human beings, not by chance or in anger, but because it sought them as food, would he agree to come to their help.

One noticed, too, that the keen observation of jungle life that had once seemed to minister to sport now became of increasing interest for its own sake. There could be nothing more enjoyable than to spend in his company long days on the hillside or in the jungle, where every twisted twig, every call of bird or animal, seemed to carry its own meaning to him; or, if the interpretation was not at once clear, would provide him with matter for most engaging speculation. For him, this was not nature study, it was his world, and these were the things that meant life and death to its inhabitants. Photography became of greater concern than shooting. I recall an occasion when I chanced on him as he emerged in some apparent disorder from a tangled thicket in the jungle near Kaladhungi. He explained that he had been trying to get a picture of a tigress, but she was in a bad temper, and as often as he went into the thicket she drove him out again. He added, however, as one who was ready to make due allowances, that she had her cubs with her. This seemed to be typical of the terms on which he now stood with the animals of Kumaon. There was an understanding which would justify the tigress in demonstrating against the intrusion on her nursery. But the matter need not be carried further.

When during the Second World War he gave the Government his services in training troops in jungle fighting, he received the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and in 1946 there was conferred on him the distinction of the Companionship of the Indian Empire. The Government had previously allowed him a privilege which he valued very highly when it gave him the 'freedom of the jungle', or, in other words, the liberty of entry to all its Forest Reserves. I do not need to speak here of the regard in which he came to be held by the people of Kumaon. As kindly and generous as he

was fearless, he gave freely of himself, and asked nothing in return. But I think that in the olden days he would have been one of the small band of Europeans whose memory has been worshipped by Indians as that of men who were in some measure also gods.

When so many of his friends left India in 1947, he and his sister decided to leave also, and made their home at Nyeri in Kenya. It could not have been an easy decision for him to make. He loved his home in Kaladhungi as greatly as he was himself beloved by its villagers. But Kenya could at all events minister to his passion for photographing wild life, and he was able to indulge it to the full. The proximity of Tree Tops to Nyeri made him a frequent visitor there, and it is pleasant to know that we have now his own story of the visit of Her Majesty the Queen to Tree Tops, for the letters which he wrote at the time to his friends showed how very deeply moved he was by his experiences as a member of her party.

HAILEY

*London*  
*September 1955*





## Tree Tops

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A BRILLIANT sun was shining in a deep blue sky and the air was crisp and invigorating, on that fifth day of February 1952.

I was standing on a wooden platform, thirty feet above ground, and before me stretched an oval-shaped clearing in the forest, two hundred yards long and a hundred yards wide. A miniature lake with tall tufts of grass dotted on it occupied two-thirds of this open space, the rest consisted of a salt-lick. On the farther margin of the lake a snow-white heron stood motionless, waiting patiently for the approach of unwary frogs, and in the open water in front of it a pair of dabchicks were taking their young brood of four, which looked no bigger than marbles, on what was evidently their first ex-cursion into a danger-filled world. On the salt-lick a solitary rhino was moving restlessly, occasionally stooping to lick the salt ground and then throwing his head to snuff the wind that was blowing down towards him from the forest.



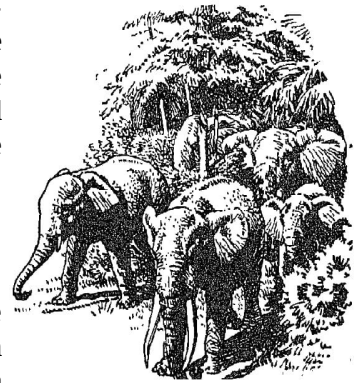
The lake and the salt-lick were surrounded on three sides by dense tree forests and on the fourth, and farthest from me, by a hundred-yard-wide strip of grass which came right down to the margin of the lake. Beyond the strip of grass, and forming a frame for it, was a belt of Cape Chestnuts. These chestnuts were in full bloom, and sporting among the blue tinged with purple flowers was a troop of colobus monkeys winch, with their flowing white tails and long white mantles hanging from their shoulders, looked like giant butterflies as they flitted from tree to tree. A more beautiful and a more peaceful scene it would not have been possible to conceive; and yet not all was peace, for in the dense forest beyond the monkeys was a herd of elephants and in the herd was discord. Every few minutes the air was rent by loud trumpeting mingled with the screaming and deep rumbling of angry elephants. As the sounds of strife drew nearer, the monkeys collected in a group and after barking in alarm flitted away over the tree-tops, led by a mother who had a young babe clinging to her breast. The solitary rhino now decided his need of salt had been met and snorting his defiance he turned in one movement, as only a rhino can turn, and with head held high and tail in the air, trotted into the forest on the left. Only the heron, still patient and unrewarded, and the family of dabchicks, remained unaffected by the approaching herd. Presently out of the dense forest the elephants began to appear, not in Indian file but on a broad front of fifty yards. Silent now, and unhurried, in twos and threes they drifted on to the bush-dotted strip of grass, while my eyes ranged back and forth until I had counted forty-seven. The last to come into the open were three bulls, one quite evidently the master of the herd and the other two younger brothers, or possibly sons, who were approaching the time when they would wrest the mastery of the herd from their elder, and drive him into exile.

At the far end of the platform on which I was standing a short flight of steps led up into the hut which is known to all the world as 'Tree Tops'. The hut is built in the upper branches of a giant *ficus* tree and is only accessible by a steep and narrow thirty-foot-long ladder. Time was when, for the safety of the occupants of the hut, the foot of the ladder was cranked by a winch into the upper branches of an adjoining tree, but this safety device had long since been discontinued. The accommodation of the hut

consisted of a dining-room, in one corner of which was recessed a wood-burning stove, three bedrooms for visitors, a narrow slip of a room for the White Hunter, and a long open balcony provided with comfortable cushioned seats. From the balcony there was a clear and uninterrupted view of the miniature lake, the salt-lick, and of the forest beyond, with the Aberdare mountains in the background rising to a height of 14,000 feet.

\* \* \*

PRINCESS ELIZABETH and the Duke of Edinburgh had arrived at the Royal Lodge, Sagana, twenty miles from Nyeri, two days before, and on that February morning I had just finished shaving when I received a breath-taking telephone message informing me that Her Royal Highness had been graciously pleased to invite me to accompany her to Tree Tops. The Royal Party were to leave the Lodge at 1 p.m. and, driving slowly, arrive at 2 p.m. at Tree Tops where I was to meet them.



Nyeri has one of the finest polo grounds in Kenya and the previous day a match in which the Duke had taken part had been played there, with the Princess watching. The polo ground is eight miles from Nyeri and fifteen miles from the Royal Lodge, and is surrounded on three sides by forest and high grass. Neither my sister Maggie nor I feel happy in a crowd, so while the populace from far and wide was collecting at the polo ground for the great event, we motored to a bridge spanning a deep ravine which runs through dense forest towards the ground. Though a state of emergency had not up to that time been declared, security measures were being taken, for the unrest had started and there had been in the neighbourhood a number of cases of arson about which the press, for obvious reasons, had kept silent. I was uneasy about the deep ravine which afforded an easy approach to the polo ground. However, on examining the stretches of sand in it I was relieved to find no footprints, so we spent the rest of the evening near the bridge, keeping watch on the ravine. This accounts for our absence from the polo match.



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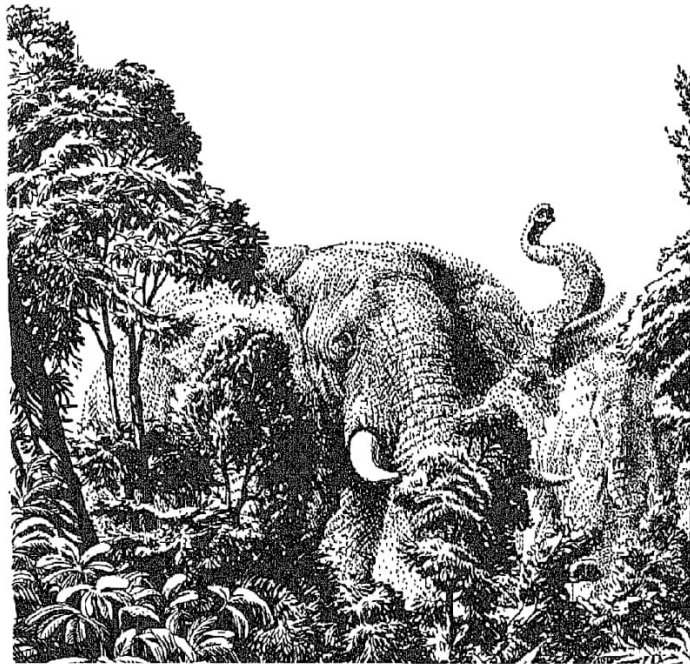
AFTER receiving the telephone message I shaved a second time, had breakfast, and then went to the administrative headquarters to get a road pass, for I had to use the road that had been closed for the Royal Party. At midday I motored eight miles along the main road and, leaving it at the polo ground, took a rough track which runs for two miles up a narrow valley to the foot of the Tree Tops hill. Here, where the track ends and a narrow footpath winds up the hill through dense cover for six hundred yards to Tree Tops, I removed my handbag and British warm from the car, and sent it back to Nyeri. To a number of trees adjoining the path, slats of wood had been nailed to form ladders as a means of escape in the event of attack by elephants, rhino, or buffaloes. It is a sobering fact that two days after that path had been traversed by the Princess and her party, four of the biggest trees to which ladders were nailed were uprooted by elephants.

\* \* \*

IT was now 1.30 p.m. on that fifth day of February, and 2 p.m. was zero hour. The elephants, still silent and peaceful, were quietly browsing on the grass and bushes while slowly drifting down towards the lake, and it was possible to observe them more closely. They were of all sizes and of all ages, and five of the

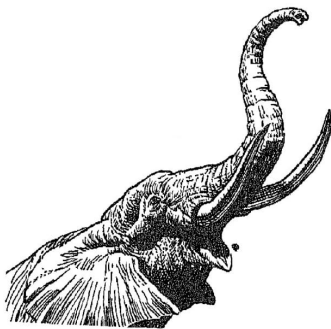
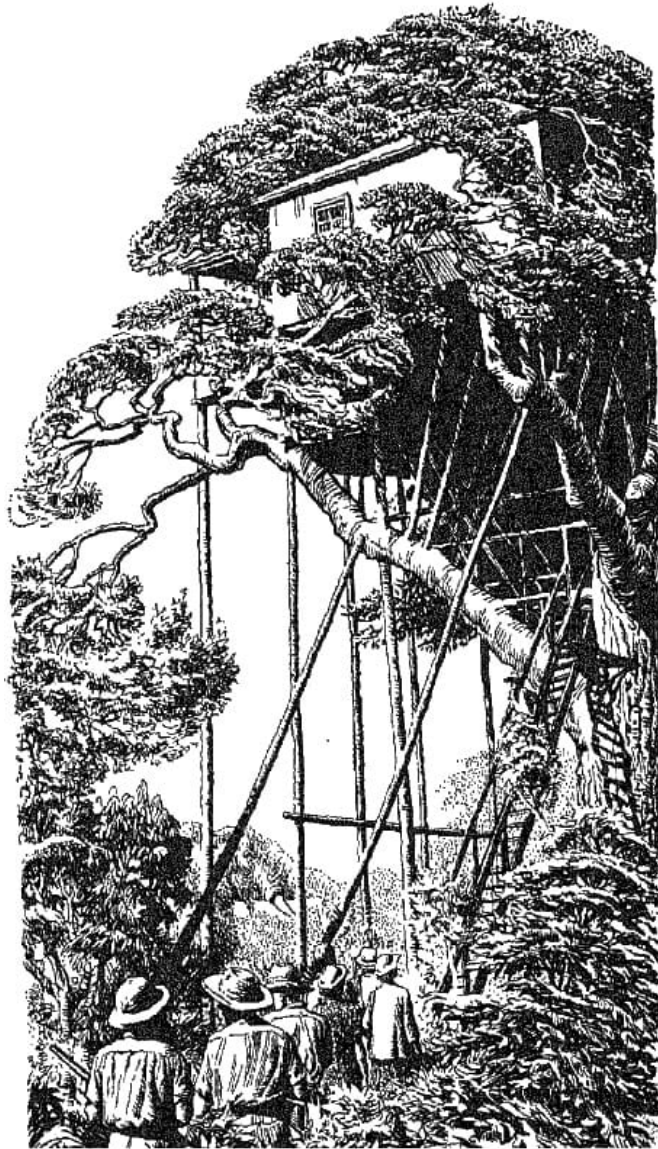


cows were accompanied by calves only a few weeks old. These five cows, and the three bulls, who were in that seasonal condition known as 'must', were a potential danger. However, if the herd remained on the far side of the lake for another thirty minutes, all would be well. The minutes dragged by, as they do in times of strain, and when only fifteen remained the elephants started to edge down towards the salt-lick. This salt-lick extended to within a few yards of the *figus* tree, and from the projecting balcony it was possible to drop a handkerchief on to any animal on the lick below. Between the lick and the tree a few small branches had been laid, to form a screen for people approaching the ladder leading to the hut above. These branches had been crushed down by elephants and other animals and, at the time I am writing of, the screen was a screen only in name.



On the platform, with the passing of every moment, my anxiety was growing. The herd of forty-seven elephants was crowded together on the salt-lick. It was zero hour and the Royal Party, if it was up to time, would now be on the path, and at that moment the big bull elephant, annoyed by the attention the two young bulls were paying to one of the cows, charged them and all three enraged animals dashed into the forest on the left, trumpeting and screaming with rage, and started to circle round at the back of Tree Tops, and in the direction of the path. Would the escort with the Royal Party, on hearing the elephants, decide that it was too dangerous to go forward and so return to the comparative safety of the open ground where they had alighted from their cars, or would they take the risk of trying to reach the ladder leading up to the hut? Crossing the platform, I peered into the forest. From the foot of the ladder the path ran for forty yards in a straight line, and then curved out of sight to the left. Terrifying sounds were to be heard in plenty but nothing was to be seen on the path, and there was nothing that could be done. Presently I caught sight of a man carrying a rifle at the ready, followed closely by a small trim figure. The party had arrived, and on reaching the bend in the path, from where the elephants on the salt-lick were in full view, came to a halt. No time was to be lost, so, slipping down the ladder, I approached the small figure which, from her photographs, I recognized as Princess Elizabeth. Smiling her greeting, and without a moment's hesitation, the Princess walked unhurriedly straight towards the elephants which were now crowded at the

hut end of the salt-lick, and within ten yards of the foot of the ladder. Handing her handbag and camera to me, the Princess climbed the steep ladder, followed by Lady Pamela Mountbatten, the Duke, and Commander Parker. The escort, led by Edward Windley, then turned and retraced their steps down the footpath.



In the course of a long lifetime I have seen some courageous acts, but few to compare with what I witnessed on that fifth day of February. The Princess and her companions, who had never previously been on foot in an African forest, had set out that glorious day to go peacefully to Tree Tops and, from the moment they left, their ears had been assailed— as they told me later— by the rampaging of angry elephants. In single file, and through dense bush where visibility in places was limited to a yard or two, they went towards those sounds, which grew more awe-inspiring the nearer they approached them. And then, when they came to the bend in the path and within sight of the elephants, they found that they would have to

approach within ten yards of them to reach the safety of the ladder. A minute after climbing the ladder the Princess was sitting on the balcony and, with steady hands, was filming the elephants.

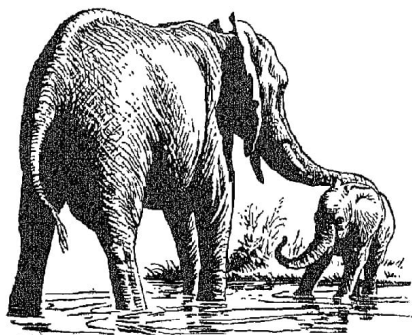


It was not usual for elephants to be seen at Tree Tops at that time of the day and, while they were being filmed, they did all that elephants could be expected to do. The old bull returned to the herd, followed at a respectful distance by the two young bulls, and he again chased them away, to the accompaniment of loud trumpeting and angry screaming. A flock of doves alighted on an open patch of ground, and on seeing them one of the elephants filled its trunk with dust and, cautiously approaching, discharged the dust at them, for all the world like a man discharging a gun loaded with black powder. The doves were



doing no harm and it was out of sheer mischief that the elephant frightened them away, for after doing so it flicked its trunk up and down as if laughing and flapped its ears with delight. The Duke witnessed this side-play with great amusement and when the doves returned and the same elephant, or it may have been another, again sucked dust into its trunk and approached the birds he drew the Princess's attention to the scene, which she filmed.

A cow elephant now came towards us with the smallest of the calves close to her side. Stopping a few yards in front of the balcony the mother pressed the damp tip of her trunk on to the salt-impregnated dust, and then conveyed it to her mouth. The calf, taking advantage of its mother's preoccupation, inserted its head under her left foreleg and started to suckle. Greatly interested in this filial scene the Princess, who had her eye to her cine-camera, exclaimed, 'Oh, look. It is going to drive the baby away!' This was said as a small elephant, three or four years of age, trotted up to the mother and inserting its head under her right foreleg, also started to feed. The mother stood perfectly still while the meal was in progress and when the baby and its elder sister had had enough, or possibly when there was no more to be had, the mother disengaged herself and passing under the balcony, accompanied by the baby, went out on to a spit of land jutting into the lake. Here she had a drink, sucking the water into her trunk, raising her head, and pouring it down her throat. After quenching her thirst she walked into the lake for a few yards and then stood still. Left to itself the baby got nervous and started to squeal in a thin small voice. To the cry for help the mother paid not the least attention, for this was a lesson that it was safe for the young to follow where the mother led. Eventually the baby summoned sufficient courage to wade into the water, and when it was within reach the mother tenderly drew it to her and, supporting it with her trunk, gently propelled it to the far bank.



When watching a herd of elephants it is intensely interesting to see how kind they are to the young. Bored with standing about while their elders are feeding, the young play about and get in the way. When this happens, even with great terrifying-looking bulls, the young are gently put aside, and are never struck or trodden on. Of all the animals in the wild, elephants have the most real family or herd life. When a female retires for maternity reasons the elders of her own sex are always on hand to keep her company and to protect the young, and until the new arrival is able to walk the herd remains in the vicinity. If young or old get into difficulties or are threatened with danger, real or imaginary, the others rally round to

give what help they can. It is for this reason that herds in which there are young are avoided, and it was for the same reason that the approach to the ladder was dangerous, for if the wind had changed, or if a nervous cow with a very young calf had seen the party, there would have been grave risk of an attack.

Fortunately the wind did not change and by approaching the elephants unhurriedly and noiselessly the Princess and her companions avoided detection.

Karra, a big male baboon who had recently lost a part of his upper lip in a fight, which gave him a very sinister look, now led his family of eleven down a forest track to the edge of the salt-lick. Here they halted, for elephants dislike baboons and I have seen them chase such a family into trees and then shake the trees in an attempt to dislodge them. Karra was taking no risks on this occasion. After surveying the scene he led his family back into the forest and, circling round the salt-lick, approached the *ficus* tree from the left. A bold young female now left the family and, climbing one of the wooden supports of the hut, arrived on the balcony. Running along the railing, and avoiding dislodging the cameras and field-glasses placed on it, she gained a branch of the *ficus* tree jutting out from the hut. Here she was rewarded with a sweet potato nearly as big as her head and while she sat contentedly peeling it with her teeth was filmed and photographed at a range of a few feet.



\* \* \*



TIME slipped by unnoticed, and when the Princess was told that tea was ready in the dining- room, she said, 'Oh, please may I have it here? I don't want to miss one moment of this.' While tea was being taken, the elephants drifted off the salt-lick, some going into the forest on the left, and others passing under the balcony and going along the shore of the lake to the right. The Princess had laid her tea-cup aside and was looking at a sheaf of photographs, when I saw two male waterbuck racing at full speed down a forest glade towards the salt-lick. On my drawing the Princess's attention to the two animals, she reached for her camera, and the photographs slipped from her lap to the floor. Saying a word or two, amply justified in the circumstances, the Princess got her camera to her eye just as the two bucks, with only a length between them, dashed with a great splash into the lake. When the leading one had covered about forty yards it stumbled over a sunken tree-stump, and without a moment's hesitation the one behind plunged its horns into it. One horn entered the unfortunate animal's left buttock, while the other went between its legs and into its Stomach. So firmly fixed were the horns that their owner was dragged forward for a short distance before it could free itself. The wounded animal plunged on until it reached the shelter of a big tuft of grass. Here where the water was up to its neck it halted, while the aggressor circled round through shallow water and after shaking its head in defiance walked off into the forest. This incident, which was evidently the final act in a battle that had started in the forest, had been filmed by the Princess and now, laying her camera aside, she picked up her field-glasses. Presently passing the glasses to me, she asked, 'Is that blood? Do you think it will die?' Yes, it was blood. The water all round was red with it and, judging by the laboured way in which the stricken animal was breathing, I said I thought it would die.

Karra and his family, who had been joined at the salt-lick by five warthogs and a dainty young doe bushbuck, were now causing a diversion. Two teenage females were competing for the affections of a boy friend, whom both of them claimed, and this was causing angry scenes and a lot of screaming. Karra would have settled the dispute by chastising all three of the young ones if he had not at the time been contentedly lying in the



sun— being filmed— while one of his wives ran her fingers through his thick fur, looking for the things that were irritating his skin and which it was her wifely duty to find and remove. While this was going on, the five warthogs were down on their knees cropping the short grass on the edge of the salt-lick, and the youngest of Karra's children was industriously trying to climb up the young doe's hind-legs in order to catch its tail. Every time an attempt was made the doe skipped aside, enjoying the game as much as the onlookers.



Neither the Princess nor the Duke smokes, so, as I am addicted to this pernicious habit, I left my seat near the Princess and went to the end of the balcony, where I was presently joined by the Duke. In the course of our conversation I told him that I knew Eric Shipton, that I had read the articles in *The Times* relating to the Abominable Snowman, and that I had seen the photographs taken by Shipton of the footprints in the snow. Asked if I had any theories about the Abominable Snowman, I told the Duke, much to his amusement, that I did not believe that the tracks in the snow photographed by Shipton had been made by a four-legged creature, and that while I would not dream of accusing Shipton of a leg-pull, I had a suspicion that his own leg had been pulled. I went on to say that knowing the great interest that was being taken in the snowman I was disappointed that Shipton had not followed the tracks back to see where they had come from, and forward to see where they led to. This, the Duke said, was a question he himself had put to Shipton, and that Shipton had told him the tracks had come from the direction of windswept rocks which had no snow on them, and that they led to other rocks devoid of snow where it was not possible to follow them.

\* \* \*

WITH the passage of time, the shadows were beginning to lengthen. More animals, more in fact than had ever before been seen at Tree Tops, were coining out of the forest on to the open ground. In the slanting rays of the sun these animals, together with the massed bloom of the Cape Chestnuts, reflected in the still waters of the lake, presented a picture of peace and of beauty which only an inspired artist could have painted, and to which no words of mine could do justice.

On rejoining the Princess she again handed me her field-glasses, and said, 'I think the poor thing is dead.' The stricken waterbuck did indeed look dead, but presently it raised its head from the tuft of grass on which it was resting and, struggling to the bank, lay with its neck stretched out and its chin resting on the ground. After it had been lying without movement in this position for a few minutes, three elephants went up and, stretching out their trunks, smelt it from head to tail. Not liking what they smelt they shook their heads in disapproval and quietly walked away. From the fact that the buck had not reacted in any way to the presence of the elephants we concluded that it was now dead, so Commander Parker and I went to look at it. While we were going through the hut and climbing down the ladder, the dead animal was dragged away— possibly by the two leopards whose pug marks I had seen on the path when going to Tree Tops— for all we found on reaching the spot was a pool of blood. Close to the pool of blood was a big bush behind which the partly eaten remains of the waterbuck were found next day.





Throughout the afternoon and evening the Princess made detailed notes of all the events she had witnessed, and of all the animals she filmed. These notes I knew were intended as a running commentary for those at home who would see her films while she was on her visit to Australia—the visit that did not take place.

As the beautiful sunset faded out of the sky and the soft light of the moon illuminated the scene, cameras were put away and we talked in hushed voices suiting our surroundings and the subjects we talked on. I told the Princess how grieved I had been to hear of her father's illness, and how greatly I rejoiced that he was again well enough to indulge in his favourite sport, bird-shooting. And I told her how distressed I had been to learn from the B.B.C.'s broadcast that her father had stood hatless in a bitter cold wind to wave to her as she left the London airport. On my expressing the hope that he had not caught cold, she said that he was like that; he never thought of himself. The Princess then told me of her father's long illness, their anxieties, their fears, their hopes, and their joy when one day he put his walking-stick to his shoulder and said, 'I



believe I could shoot now.' This was hailed as a turning-point in his illness, and a token that he had taken a new grip on life. The Princess asked me if I had ever shot grouse, and when I told her I had tried to do so, with little success, she said that I would know how difficult they are to shoot and would therefore have some idea of how well the King shot when she told me that on the first day he went out he shot, from one butt alone, forty-three birds. That was more, I told her, than I had shot in a week from many butts. The Princess rejoined that her father was a very good shot. She then told me where her father had been shooting on that fifth day of February, and where he intended shooting on the following-day.

I have heard it said, and have seen it stated, that when the Princess waved goodbye to His Majesty the King at the London airport on her departure for Australia, she knew she would never see him again on earth, This I do not believe. I am convinced that the young Princess who spoke of her father that night with such great affection and pride, and who expressed the fervent hope that she would find him quite recovered on her return, never had the least suspicion that she would not see him again.

\* \* \*

DINNER was now announced and, leaving the balcony, we filed into the dining-room. Covers had been laid for the seven people present, and as I moved to the farther end of the room, the Princess said, 'Won't you come and sit between us?' As she said this, the Duke indicated the cushioned seat that had been prepared for him and took the uncushioned seat next to it. On either side of the long unpolished dining-table were benches made, I am sure, of the hardest wood the Duke has ever sat on. Eric and Lady Bettie Walker were our hosts and the sumptuous repast they provided was greatly appreciated, for the excitements of the day and the fresh clean air of the forest had given everyone a keen appetite. While coffee was being made on the table, the spirit lamp caught fire, and was swept off the table on to the grass-matted floor. As frantic efforts were being made to stamp out the blaze the African boy who had served dinner unhurriedly came forward, ex-tinguished the flames with a wet cloth, retired to his cubbyhole behind the stove, and a minute later replaced the lamp refilled and relit on the table. Not long after, Tree Tops was raided and that very efficient boy was carried off, together with all the bedding, provisions, cooking utensils, and other movable articles in the hut, and it is left to conjecture whether the boy's bones are bleaching in the African sun, or whether he became a terrorist.





After dinner the Princess and her party returned to the balcony. In the dim light of the moon nine rhino could be seen on the salt-lick. The heron and the family of dabchicks, the elephants, and the other animals, had all retired and the frogs that had been so vocal earlier were now silent.

Leaving the Royal Party on the balcony, where they stayed until the moon set, and taking my old British warm which had served me well during the war years, I went down and made myself comfortable on the top step of the thirty-foot ladder. I had spent so many long nights on the branches of trees that a few hours on the step of a ladder was no hardship; in fact it was on this occasion a pleasure. A pleasure to feel that I would have the honour of guarding for one night the life of a very gracious lady who, in God's good time, would sit on the throne of England. And after that day of days I needed to be left in quietness with my thoughts.

The moon set and in the heart of the forest the night was intensely dark. Visibility was nil but that did not matter, for with the exception of a snake nothing could climb the ladder without my feeling the vibration. Within a few inches of my face, and visible against the sky through a break in the foliage of the *ficus* tree, was hanging a manila rope which went over a pulley and was used for hauling up baggage and provisions from the ground to the rooms above. Presently, and without my having heard a sound, this rope was agitated. Something moving on soft feet had laid a hand on it, or had brushed against it. A few tense moments passed, but there was no vibration on the ladder, and then the rope was agitated again for the second time. Possibly one of the leopards whose pug marks I had seen on the path had come to the ladder and on finding it occupied had gone away. The ladder, though steep, would have offered no obstacle to an animal with the climbing ability of a leopard, and for all I knew to the contrary the platform above me may have been used by leopards as an observation post, or as a place on which to sleep at night. In contrast with an Indian jungle the African forest is disappointingly silent at night and, except for an occasional quarrel among the rhinos, all I heard throughout the night was the mournful call of a hyena, the bark of a bushbuck, and the cry of a tree hyrax.



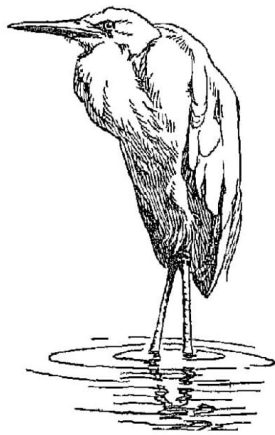
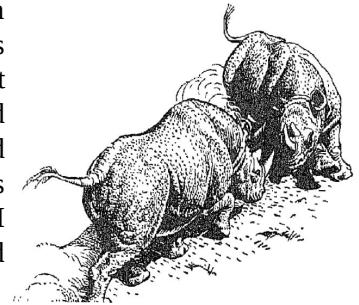
At the first glimmer of dawn I washed and shaved, and on going up to the hut found the Princess sitting on the balcony with a meter in her hand, testing the light before making a film record of an old rhino that was on the salt-lick. Daylight comes rapidly in Africa, and when the first rays of the sun lit up the scene before her, the Princess started to take the picture she had been waiting for. While she was filming the rhino the Duke drew her attention to a second rhino that was coming down to the salt-lick. The two animals were evidently old enemies, for they ran at each other in a very aggressive manner and for a time it appeared that a great fight would be staged for the benefit of the Royal onlookers.

Advancing and retreating like experienced boxers manoeuvring for position, the two rhinos sparred round each other until the newcomer decided that discretion was preferable to valour and, with a final snort of defiance, trotted back into the forest, giving the Princess an opportunity of drinking the welcome hot tea that Lady Bettie was handing round.

Though she had spent so few hours in sleep the Princess had started that second day with eyes sparkling and a face as fresh as a flower. No artificial aids were needed or used to enhance the bloom on her cheeks. Many years previously I had stood one winter's day on the banks of the Ganges with the

Princess's grandfather, and looking at her now it was easy to see from whom she had inherited her beautiful colouring.

With the rhinos gone and only the white heron standing motionless on the margin of the lake and the family of dabchicks cutting furrows across its smooth surface, cameras and field-glasses were put away and we went to the dining-room for breakfast, which consisted of scrambled eggs and bacon, toast, marmalade, and coffee made this time without mishap, and the choicest and most luscious fruit that Africa could provide. There was no need now to talk in hushed voices, and as we finished breakfast I remarked that the Princess was the only member of her family who had ever slept in a tree, or eaten a dinner and a breakfast prepared in one.



The escort that was to conduct the Royal Party through the forest to the waiting cars now arrived, led by Edward Windley, and as the radiantly happy Princess drove away she waved her hand and called out, 'I will come again.' Soon after her return to the Royal Lodge the Princess was told that her father, of whom she had spoken with such affection and pride, had died in his sleep during the previous night.

I do not think that any two young people have ever spent such happy and carefree hours as Princess Elizabeth and Duke Philip spent at Tree Tops, from 2 p.m. on 5 February to 10 a.m. on 6 February. For myself, those hours that I was honoured and privileged to spend in their company will remain with me while memory lasts.

A register is kept of visitors to Tree Tops, and of the animals seen. The day after the Princess visited Tree Tops the register was brought to me to write up. After recording the names of the Royal Party, the animals seen, and the incidents connected with them, I wrote:

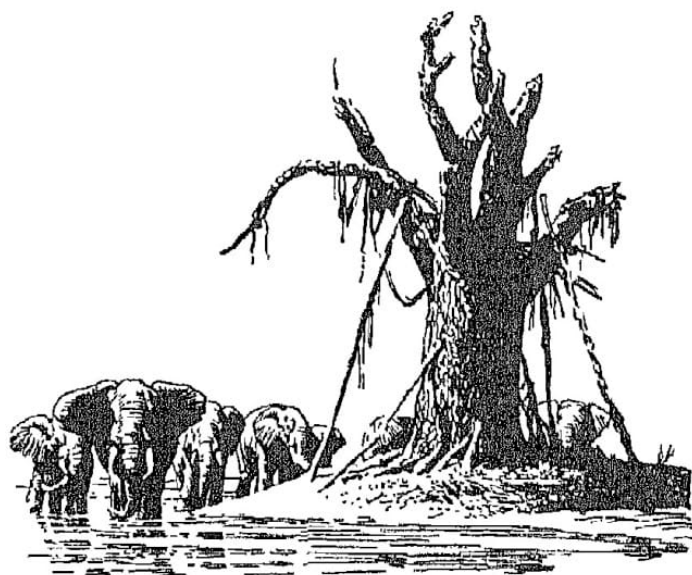
For the first time in the history of the world a young girl climbed into a tree one day a Princess, and after having what she described as her most thrilling experience she climbed down from the tree the next day a Queen— God bless her.

\* \* \*

ALL that now remains of the *ficus* tree and the hut honoured by Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, and visited for a quarter of a century by thousands of people from all parts of the world, is a dead and blackened stump standing in a bed of ashes. From those ashes a new Tree Tops will one day arise, and from another balcony a new generation will view other birds and animals. But for those of us who knew the grand old tree and the friendly hut, Tree Tops has gone for ever.



NYERI  
6 April 1955



# GLOSSARY

*anna*: 16th part of a rupee

*babbler*: long-legged thrush

*basonta*: bushes

*belled, belling*: – the warning ‘honk’ made by a sambur

*Bhutia*: man from across the border

*charpoy*: Indian bedstead

*chital*: spotted deer

*chowkidar*: watchman

*chukor*: hill partridge

*cooee*: signal call used in the bush

*dandy*: Himalayan hammock-like litter

*dak*: relay of men for post or transport

*dak bungalow*: an inn for travellers on a *dak* route

*drag*: the trail, line of scent

*darbar*: public audience or levee

*Garhwali*: – ethno-linguistic group who live in the Garhwal Himalayas of the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand

*ghat*: landing-place, passage down to a river

*ghooral*: mountain goat

*godown*: a warehouse or goods store

*gur*: crude sugar

*jaggery*: a coarse brown sugar made from palm sap

*kalij*: Indian pheasant

*kakar*: barking deer

*karphal*: a tree producing sweet berries

*khud (side)*: , ravine, precipice

*langur*: a long-tail monkey

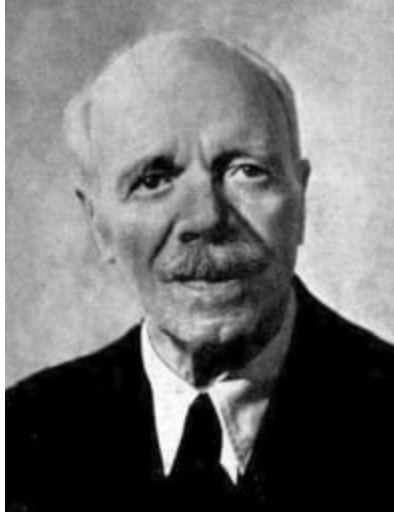
*machan*: a platform in a tree, used for observation

*mahseer*: large Indian freshwater fish  
*mugger*: broad-nosed crocodile  
*nullah*: a stream, river-bed, watercourse  
*paddy field*: rice field  
*Patwari*: village registrar or accountant  
*pea-fowl*: pea-cock, pea-hen  
*pipal-tree*: the sacred fig of India  
*pug*: footprint  
*pugrees*: turban  
*ringals*: stunted bamboos, hill bamboos  
*‘Ram nam sat hai’*: ‘The name of Rama is true’  
*rowkah*: dry watercourse  
*sadhu*: a Hindu ascetic or holy man  
*sahib*: ‘Sir’; also, an Englishman or European  
*sal*: a valuable timber tree  
*sambur*: deer  
*sari*: a long garment of cloth or silk worn by Indian women  
*‘Satya bol gat hai’*: ‘In truth lies salvation’  
*scree*: heap of stones, or rocky debris  
*semul-tree*: silk cotton-tree (*Bombax malabaricum*)  
*serow*: Asiatic antelope  
*shaitan*: devil, evil spirit  
*shikar, shikari*: hunting, hunter’s guide  
*tahr*: large wild goat  
*Tahsildar*: chief revenue officer  
*terai*: a belt of marshy land between the foot-hills of the Himalayas and the plains  
*zamindar*: landowner paying the government a fixed revenue  
*Pegs and curves: measuring tigers*: Peg placed in ground at front part of breastbone, another against the ischium or bone that is felt on each side below the tail: the distance is the length of the body when

measuring a tiger. Curves measures the contours of the body to get a measurement of girth/bulk as well.



## **Author**



Jim Corbett  
1875-1955

Edward James Corbett CIE VD (25 July 1875 – 19 April 1955) was a British hunter, tracker, naturalist, and author who hunted a number of man-eating tigers and leopards in India. He held the rank of colonel in the British Indian Army and was frequently called upon by the Government of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, now the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, to kill man-eating tigers and leopards that were preying on people in the nearby villages of the Kumaon-Garhwal Regions.

He authored *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, *Jungle Lore*, and other books recounting his hunts and experiences, which enjoyed critical acclaim and commercial success. He became an avid photographer and spoke out for the need to protect India's wildlife from extermination.

## **Illustrator**



Raymond Sheppard, RA  
1913–1958

Raymond Sheppard was born in London in 1913. He was educated at Christ's College, Finchley and went on to study art at the School of Photo-Engraving and Lithography, Bolt Court, under S.G. Boxsius. He illustrated many books, studying birds and animals from life, often at Regents Park Zoo. He was made a Fellow of the Zoological Society in 1949. A founder member of the Wapping Arts Group, he served in the RAF photographic section during WW2. After the war he suffered prolonged ill health but remained prolific. His artistic legacy bears testimony to his diverse talent as a master draughtsman, illustrator, and landscape and wildlife artist.

